**CONCERT HALL IN KARLOVY VARY WINS THE 2024 CZECH ARCHITECTURE AWARD**

*CCA press release, 7 November 2024*

**The jury of this year’s** [**Czech Architecture Award**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en) **deemed the** [**Concert Hall in Karlovy Vary**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/koncertni-sal-v-cisarskych-laznich-v-karlovych-varech) **designed by Petr Hájek, Nikoleta Slováková and Martin Stoss of Petr Hájek ARCHITEKTI the most successful work. A well-considered object inserted into the hall of the renovated Imperial Spa, it has transformed the notional heart of the entire building. Along with the overall winner, a further 5 works received the title of Finalist and one work received an Honorable Mention. They were selected from 31 nominated works chosen from a total of 307 works entered. The results of the 9th edition of the Czech Architecture Award were announced on 7 November at a gala evening held at Prague’s Forum Karlín and broadcast live online at ČT art. The competitive showcase is organised by the Czech Chamber of Architects.**

**The President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic Award presented by Miloš Vystrčil, the Ministry of Regional Development CR Award for the Promotion of Quality Construction Through Architectural Competitions, the Ministry for Industry and Trade CR Award for the Revitalisation of a Brownfield Site, and the Ministry of Culture CR Award for Improving the Quality of Public Space were also presented at the gala. Three projects were recognised by long-standing partners from the private sector – Central Group, VEKRA and Velux.**

The aim of the [**Czech Architecture Award**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en), a nationwide showcase of architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture, is to present quality results of the work of established and emerging architects implemented on the territory of the Czech Republic over the past five years. It is the only competitive showcase where all participants may register free of charge and in which the entered works are assessed regardless of category and according to European standards, i.e. by seven foreign specialists – architects not uninfluenced by local relationships or the frequently complicated circumstances of a work’s implementation.

“The Czech Architecture Award fulfils very well the mission of the Czech Chamber of Architects and the updated Architecture and Building Cultural Policy of the Czech Republic – to present quality architectural projects implemented in our country to professionals and, above all, the lay public. Such works can inspire renovations and the design of new buildings in both the private and public sectors,” said Jan Kasl, President of the Czech Chamber of Architects and the Committee of the Czech Architecture Award, regarding the announcement of the results.

Greek architect **Alexandros Vaitsos** chaired this year’s jury. The other members included architect **Doris Wälchli** (Switzerland), landscape architect **Neil Porter** (Great Britain), architect and urbanist **Silja Tillner** (Austria), architect **Peter Moravčík** (Slovakia), architect and journalist **Adriana Granato** (Italy) and architect and lecturer **Andrius Ropolas** (Lithuania). The jurors travelled to the Czech Republic in early August. During visits to the shortlisted nominees, they met with the designers and spoke with them about their work, approaches and the broader context in which their work was produced.

During thought-provoking discussions, the jury agreed on the criteria for assessing all of the projects, which included: **diversity** (in its evaluations, the jury did not favour any typology or design methodology, but tried to honour the full spectrum of creativity), **sustainability** (with awareness of the current climate crisis, the jury looked for projects that included inspiring ecological innovations), **reusing buildings and embedded carbon** (reuse of existing buildings has become important and should be prioritised over demolition and new construction), **empowerment and social sustainability** (in the postmodern era, architects are becoming less influential in the important decisions that are shaping the world in which we live, so the jurors wanted to highlight projects and approaches that prove architecture has the potential to nurture significant social impact, creating spaces, circumstances, and relationships that enhance human coexistence in cities and in the countryside), **craftsmanship** (good craftsmanship becomes a stimulus for multiple layers of aesthetic inspiration, so the jury looked for projects that celebrated the art of making) and **inspiration and emotion** (exceptional architecture has the ability to stimulate our senses and excite our souls; at each stop on their journey, the jury hoped to encounter an extraordinary project that would touch them emotionally).

Thanks to the participation of seven architects from abroad and their evaluation from an international perspective, the Czech Architecture Award can initiate discussions and propose topics impacting contemporary Czech architectural practice. In their closing report, the jurors mentioned three main observations inspired by their journey through the Czech Republic: “Our perspective gave us the opportunity to understand the projects we visited through a transnational prism, informed by the architectural practices of all the places where we work. The first, most alarming observation that we made about most of the projects we visited, was that they were environmentally indifferent. Too many designs did not prioritise controlling the carbon footprint of the built environment. This is in complete contrast with current international practices where architects are investing their creativity in designing innovative proposals to produce and store energy, minimise the consumption of carbon-hungry materials, invent ingenious strategies for passive heating and cooling, explore façades that enhance natural lighting conditions, control and reuse rainwater, and are holistically conscious of the overall environmental consequences of their work. Secondly, we were surprised by the abnormally long processes architects must endure to complete their work in the Czech Republic. The most common answer was 8 to 10 years. This is more than double the amount of time we are accustomed to in the countries where we practise. The integrity of architectural propositions is bound to be compromised, professional practices are bound to become insolvent and it makes the projects unnecessarily expensive, which is particularly significant for housing. Finally, we were impressed by the quantity and the high quality of projects that proposed new designs for existing buildings. These included refurbishments, historical preservations, and additions to existing buildings. From the list of 307 total entries that were submitted for the competition, 42% of them (130) were interventions in existing buildings, including four out of the six finalists, including the winner.”

**MAIN AWARD AND FINALISTS**

The jury of this year’s Czech Architecture Award deemed the [**Concert Hall in Karlovy Vary**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/koncertni-sal-v-cisarskych-laznich-v-karlovych-varech)(2023), designed by **Petr Hájek, Nikoleta Slováková and Martin Stoss of Petr Hájek ARCHITEKTI** the most successful work. A well-considered object inserted into the hall of the renovated Imperial Spa, it has transformed the notional heart of the entire building and, without exaggeration, the region. This freestanding construction in bold red is the new home of the Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra and can host a diverse array of events – concerts, theatre performances, film screenings, lectures and conferences. The entire construction stands on six legs and is designed to dampen vibrations and maintain a distance from the walls of the spa. “Its adaptable features include a retractable auditorium, an adjustable orchestra pit, and panels and screens that modify the acoustics to suit different needs. The structure is designed to be durable and easy to maintain,” the jurors assessed. The ability to completely change the atmosphere by “drawing” the curtain running along the façade of the historic building is also astonishing. The jury congratulates the winner for “showing remarkable courage in overcoming the initial constraints to develop a solution that respected the historic structure while meeting today's needs. Not only did they rise to the challenge of an impossible brief, but they also managed to convince the building's owners that their innovative vision was the right one.”

The jury of the Czech Architecture Award was also very impressed by the transformation of a building in the centre of Prague, which now houses the art workshops of the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design and serves as the [**UMPRUM Technology Center**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/technologicke-centrum-umprum) (2023). The renovation and extension, carried out by **Ivan Kroupa, Jana Moravcová and Tomáš Zmek for Projektový ateliér UMPRUM**, respects the city’s skyline and also artfully opens to the public by opening one segment of the eclectic façade across the entire height of the building. The internal spatial arrangement respects the original layout. The novelty of covering the hall with a glass roof has created a new space in a central location that can be used year-round. The semi-transparent spaces surrounding the central atrium support visual connections and the penetration of natural light deeper into the building. “This project is not only a successful architectural intervention in a complex context, but an excellent example of how to follow the 10 R principles of Circular Economy by reusing and reactivating a downtown site, the use of durable and natural materials and the flexibility of the inner layout to enable future adaptations,” the jury stated in its evaluation.

Financed by a private investor, [**Sports Hall Řevnice**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/sportovni-hala-revnice)(2023) also numbered among the Finalists. The project was designed to meet the needs of students, sports clubs and the entire urban community. Although the scheme of the complex is relatively simple, architects **Peter Sticzay-Gromski, Jan Horký and Sebastian Sticzay of Grido architektura a design** ensured that the resulting architecture was far from trivial. According to the jury, this is thanks to “the vertical structuring of the mass with the projecting cornice of the parterre, which has suppressed the impression of the hall as a monolith. The basilical lighting, wittily using the geometry of the large-span roof trusses, is an essential expressive element of the building's architectural vocabulary.” The wood on the ceiling, floor and walls of the interior actively contributes to the quality of the spatial acoustics. “The interior design is based on simple rationality, natural beauty and a combination of basic materials: concrete, wood and glass. It is wrapped in an outer shell of white plaster, resulting in a pleasant, timeless aesthetic that references the Czech architecture of the 1930s. The frontage on Školní Street is thus complemented by an elegant townhouse, which supports the intention of developing not only the school but the whole street as a cultural space for the city,” summarised the jury in its evaluation.

The conversion of brownfields can today be regarded as an architectural discipline in itself and enacts the concepts of the circular economy and sustainability. The jury recognised [**Adaptation of the Grain Silo**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/adaptace-obilneho-sila-v-arealu-winternitzovych-automatickych-mlynu)(2023), part of the revitalised Automatic Mills complex in Pardubice, as a well-considered and successful example. During this adaptation, the architects from **Prokš Přikryl architekti** focused their architectural interventions on the spatial experience of the monument in its entirety and improved accessibility with respect to its new function. For the jury, this began with the transformation of the “ground floor…into an open public space under the bins, resulting in a unique and beautiful space, while the inside of the grain bins on the second floor offer a unique spatial experience.” In their evaluation, the jury did not neglect to mention that “sustainability is also key in the choice of ambitious energy systems and technology thanks to partial heating with a ground-source heat pump and six geothermal boreholes.” Lukáš Smetana, who initiated the conversation of the Automatic Mills and invested in the adaptation of the grain silo also received this year’s Unique Achievement recognition, which is part of the Czech Architecture Award.

The [**House in Kutná Hora by Jan Holub and Tomáš Hanus of BYRÓ architekti**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/rekonstrukce-domu-v-kutne-hore)did not escape the jury’s attention. The architects’ almost “investigative” process unearthed layers of memory in a historic building, fusing them with new interventions to create functional, modern housing for a family of five. The life of the house plays out around a central, circular staircase culminating in a skylight, where a number of new openings admit light into the depths of the house and connect its individual internal spaces. The external staircases act as a counterpoint to this element, allowing a continuous flow between the interior and exterior. “The resulting mechanism is a dynamic yet smooth transition between spaces with varying degrees of privacy, skilfully connected by flexible elements such as sliding panels, internal openings and windows and translucent features,” the jury concurred, emphasising the impact of this house with its “sophisticated and sensitive approach to the renewal of heritage in historic cities, a vitally important theme today, in Europe and beyond.”

Suburban areas are the ideal places for anonymous constructions. When a utilitarian building intended for technical services is built in such a location, no one expects a sophisticated architectural design. This does not apply, however, in the case of the [**City Maintenance Base**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/zakladna-technickych-sluzeb-2024)in Prague-Lysolaje (2022) where architects **Jan Kalivoda and Vojtěch Kaas from PROGRES architekti** decided to give their best effort, by being brutally honest, stripped back and responsive to environmental challenges. Exposed materials, visible wiring, and structural elements blend seamlessly with the building’s industrial nature. “The machinery housed within the structure integrates organically with the architecture, but the architects have also taken human needs into account. This is where the soft layer of the building comes in, through the bare timber façade gate that softens the first impression. The green roof, rainwater collection and solar panels – common aspects of sustainable architecture – are less expected in industrial buildings on the outskirts of cities, yet the architects have integrated them seamlessly,” stated the jury in its evaluation, adding that the building “encourages us to reconsider the countless projects built on the fringes of cities everywhere.”

**HONORABLE MENTION**

Allotment gardens are a phenomenon that is growing in popularity, albeit often in the altered form of community gardens, due to the fact that they preserve the valuable presence of nature in areas of dense urban development. This year’s honorable mention has gone to [**Garden Pavilion**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/zahradni-pavilon)(2023), a new interpretation of the traditional cottage in such an allotment garden. Architects **Jan Holub and Tomáš Hanus of BYRÓ architekti** responded to a couple who wanted a new structure, but did not want to close themselves off from the surrounding garden. The result is a building with a hinged panel, thanks to which one side can be opened completely. Its charred wood panelling exterior blends in with its rustic neighbours. “Its architectural presence in the garden has a refreshingly light touch. It makes no attempt to formalise the garden that surrounds it, but allows its inhabitants small home comforts, through simple furniture, the use of solar power and water harvesting,” observed the jury its their rationale.

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE PARLAMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AWARD PRESENTED BY MILOŠ VYSTRČIL**

**President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic Miloš Vystrčil presented his award** as part of the CAA for the third time. Of this year’s nominated buildings, he was most impressed by the [**Low Threshold Club**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/nizkoprahovy-klub-2024)in Nová Paka (2021), located in the renovated basement of a building from 1721 and intended for the use of children and young people at risk of social exclusion. The first phase of the renovation, by **Jana Janďourková Medlíková and Jiří Janďourek of** **atakarchitekti**, included the cultivation of a public space between the building and the neighbouring Church of St. Nicholas. “The Low Threshold Club in Nová Paka is beautiful and, at the same time, a natural and dignified part of its surroundings. It also serves and assists those who have been less fortunate in life, offering them a safe refuge. The building thus enriches public space in the town both architecturally and by virtue of its function,” Miloš Vystrčil explained his decision.

**MINISTRY AWARDS**

**The Ministry of Regional Development CR Award for the Promotion of Quality Construction through Architectural Competitions** went to [**Moravian Square Park in Brno**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/park-na-moravskem-namesti-v-brne-2024)(2023). The team from **CONSEQUENCE FORMA architects** revitalised a heavily used public space in the historic centre of Brno, creating a place with its own poetics of shared comfort. The centrepoint of the design is a centrally located surface with a fountain and a generous bench of massive proportions, where one can meet with friends or simply sit, lie down or play. The concept also includes a link to the original cultural site and the void left by the German house. On the dividing line between the park and the surrounding city bustle lies a cafe with a playground. The Ministry of Regional Development appreciates that, “thanks to the design resulting from a widely publicised architectural, urban planning and landscape architecture competition, a complex solution applying multiple disciplines could be created and the potential of the area truly fulfilled. The quality of the urban environment is developed across almost all parametres and the site’s “socio-economic function has been strengthened, fostering conditions for the development of “ecosystem services”, i.e. the growth of vegetation that retains water, shades and cools the wider surroundings and offers shelter for animals.”

**The Ministry for Industry and Trade CR Award for the Revitalisation of a Brownfield Site** goes to [**Mill Hrušky**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/mlyn-hrusky)(2022) in Slovácko. Thanks to the design by **Pelčák a partner architekti**, the grandson of the original owners managed to restore the ruined mill, which had been devastated by the former agricultural collective JZD, without losing any of its original charm. The Ministry appreciates that “the character of the historic building has naturally harmonised with current needs. Traditional building materials and details have been approached with precision and respect: the brick façade has been restored, corrugated sheet metal has been replaced with a new roof and the building has been opened towards the public with pergolas and a veranda.” The building’s new, two-storey main space recalls the original spatial continuum of the interior and houses a cafe, i.e., a space for cultural and social events intended for locals and visitors to Moravia’s Podluží region, thus “managing to strengthen community activities and offer experiences that had previously been lacking,” concluded the Ministry in its evaluation.

For the first time, the Czech Architecture Awards included the awarding of the **Ministry of Culture CR Award for Improving the Quality of Public Space**. This award went to the [**Tachov Square Restoration**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/obnova-tachovskeho-namesti)in Prague (2023), by **Jiří Opočenský and Štěpán Valouch from OVA**, which succeeded in harmonising a multilayered view of improvement to public space. The renovated site had long been neglected and lacked unity; its appearance and function had been influenced by many historical forms. The basic concept of the design was the movement from the city towards the greenery of Vítkov Hill or the tunnel leading to Karlín. According to the Ministry’s evaluation, “a communication hub, it offers sidewalk seating for local restaurants and is full of greenery, but also contains a relic: the scale once used by market traders and merchants. Among other features, the square also features works of art and relaxation areas. For a space with such varied features, the result is surprisingly calm, well-ordered, and even hierarchical in places. Through subtle interventions, OVA has preserved all of the square’s functions and history, including a multi-leveled intersection. They have succeed in creating a refined public space that had previously been lacking in this location” the Ministry explained in its evaluation.

**PARTNER AWARDS**

The **Central Group Award for an Innovative Approach to Designing New Housing** was awarded to the nine-storey [**Iconik**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/iconik)apartment building in Prague’s Karlín neighbourhood (**Edit! / Ivan Boroš, Juraj Calaj, Vítězslav Danda**, 2023). “Through its morphology and, above all, its use of materials such as brick and iron, it references the industrial history of this part of the city. The building’s street-facing façade is optically divided into two volumes through the use of different brick cladding, to preserve the scale of the surrounding development without compromising the unity of the concept. Iconik is a successful example of an addition to a dynamically developing Prague district,” recognised Central Group.

**The VEKRA Award for a Timeless Solution Combining Aesthetics and Functionality** was presented to [**Štvanice Footbridge in Prague**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/stvanicka-lavka-v-praze)(**AI PRAHA / Petr Tej, Marek Blank, Jan Mourek, Aleš Hvízdal and Jan Hendrych**, 2022), which connects Holešovice, Štvanice Island and Karlín for pedestrians and cyclists. Constructed of ultra-high-performance concrete, it has been designed with respect for the movement of people, trees and the river; the design is timeless, clean, elegant and almost sculptural in its conception. “The professional approach to the design, thanks to which aesthetic and functional properties have been combined with firstrate quality are values we appreciate,” VEKRA concluded its evaluation.

The **VELUX AWARD FOR WORK WITH NATURAL LIGHT** went to the [**Garden Pavilion**](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/zahradni-pavilon), located in an allotment garden in Prague, close to the Vltava River (**BYRÓ architekti / Jan Holub a Tomáš Hanus**, 2023). “Although access to natural light and fresh air is often taken as given, the reality is frequently very different. This pavilion obliterates the border between interior and exterior – nature literally becomes part of the building and the building part of nature. This approach shows how simple, functional elements can bring natural light and fresh air where they are most needed,” VELUX stated regarding its decision. This project is also the recipient of an Honorable Mention from the CAA jury.

**THE NATURE CONSERVATION AGENCY AWARD**

# The Nature Conservation Agency CR (NCA) presented its Award for a Sensitive and Environmentally Friendly Construction in a Natural Landscape in June at the CAA nomination evening. This time, the award travelled to the Moravian-Silesian Beskid Mountains and the [Bell Tower in Krásná](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/zvonicka-v-krasne?ocenene=1) (2023), designed and built by architects from Kocián & Liška Architekti. The NCA appreciated the combination of “local building practices with the modern expression of contemporary timber construction” in this traditional sacred element in the mountain landscape.

# RECOGNITION OF A UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENT IN THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE

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# Each year, the Academy of the Czech Architecture Award also recognises [unique activities in the field of architecture](https://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/en/years/2024/manzelum-smetanovym-za-zachranu-gocarovych-automatickych-mlynu?ocenene=1). This June, the award was presented at the CAA nomination evening, held at Holešovice Market, to Lukáš Smetana and Zdenek Balík for the initiative leading to the conservation and sucessful conversation of Gočár’s Automatic Mills, which today are at the centre of cultural and social events in Pardubice. The meaningfulness of this activity and the quality of the work carried did not escape the attention of the CAA jury, which select the adaption of the grain silo in the Automatic Mills complex as one of this year’s Finalists (see above).

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# THANKS

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# For the sixth year, the Czech Architecture Award takes place with the support of general partner Central Group – the largest residential builder in the Czech Republic. The showcase is also supported by four main partners – VEKRA, KKCG Real Estate, VELUX and the Center for Architecture and Metropolitan Planning (CAMP) in Prague. Gala evening partners were Lenovo and PERI. Thank you!

**The 2024 Czech Architecture Award in numbers:**

* 307 works entered (the deadline was 15 April)
* 31 nominated works (announced on 27 June)
* 1 Main Award (announced on 7 November)
* 6 Finalists (announced on 7 November)
* 1 Honorable Mention from the Jury (announced on 7 November)
* President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic Award presented by Miloš Vystrčil (announced on 7 November)
* 3 Ministry Awards (announced on 7 November)
* 3 Partner Awards (announced on 7 November)
* Nature Conservation Agency Award(announced on 7 November)
* 1 Unique Achievement Award (announced on 7 November)

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***→ A*** [***PRESS***](http://ceskacenazaarchitekturu.cz/press/) ***section with photography and drawings of the winning works***

***→ The international jury’s final report and evalution for the awarding of the Main Award and the title of Finalist***

***→ Information about the Honorable Mention***

***→ Information about the Partner Awards***

***All press releases from the Czech Chamber of Architects can be found at*** [***www.cka.cz***](http://www.cka.cz) ***in the*** [***Pro média***](https://www.cka.cz/komora/o-komore/pro-media) ***section.***

**ABOUT THE CZECH ARCHITECTURE AWARD**

The competition is announced by the Czech Chamber of Architects, a professional organisation with transferred executive powers, in accordance with its mission to cultivate building culture in the Czech Republic and support the pursuit of excellence. In organising it, the Chamber wants to present the results of quality work by established and emerging architects to the professional and lay public, as well as to representatives of local and national administrations. The aesthetic and technical quality of the projects is emphasised, but so are the circumstances surrounding the creation of each work, its relationship to its surroundings, social contribution and environmental aspects. In addition to its prestigious, seven-member international jury, composed of renowned architects, the Czech Architecture Award also benefits from the unique concept of promoting architecture throughout the year and in individual regions.

**ABOUT THE CZECH CHAMBER OF ARCHITECTS**

The CCA is an autonomous professional body with transferred executive powers, which was established by Act No. 360/1992 Coll., on the Professional Practice of Certified Architects and on the Professional Practice of Certified Engineers and Technicians Active in Construction. The CCA is responsible for the professional and ethical standards of architects in the Czech Republic. Since 2015, the Chamber has been the official point of consultation for laws, decrees and other regulations relating to the profession of architect. Since January 2016, it has organised the Czech Architecture Award, a competitive showcase. Since 2000, the Chamber has also organised the Exhibition of Diploma Theses and the CCA Honours.

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