

In this issue:

- **A project by Gray International and Dedeco architects wins second prize in an international architectural competition for the Meeting of Cultures Centre in Lublin.**
- **Inspirations – Renzo Piano.**

A project by Gray International and Dedeco architects wins second prize in an international architectural competition for the Meeting of Cultures Centre in Lublin.

On 18 May 2009, the results of an international competition for the Meeting of Cultures Centre and its surroundings – the Theatre Square – were finally announced.

The architectural concept created jointly by architects from Gray International and Dedeco won second prize.

Faced with a challenging task of endowing buildings from the 1960's and 70s, known as the Theatre under Construction, with a new, appealing and functional appearance, the team based its work on a thorough analysis of the existing state as well the aspirations, needs and challenges that the Meeting of Cultures complex will have to meet in the future. Without infringing on the basic structure of the buildings or adding new floorage, the architects created an open public space, allowing free and unobstructed movement of people and thus opening the centre as a meeting point for creators and their audiences. The overall impression was further enhanced by the effects of transparency, flooding natural light, and materials responding to the play of light.

By researching the context and surroundings of the location, the architects also addressed the necessary questions concerning functional, urban and architectural links between the buildings and the Town Hall and Congress Centre to be constructed nearby. The project was accompanied by a vision of the Theatre Square as integrated with the Meeting of Cultures Centre. The project of the Square also provided for ramps, which not only solved the problem of escape routes, but also multiplied the possible applications of the public space for various types of events.

The resulting architectural concept returned lightness to the location and offered multifunctional and symbolic spaces linked by an intricate yet clear internal communication. The impressive cultural centre consists of the existing Concert Hall and, among others, the Musical Theatre, Theatre, Media Library, conference centre, Art Gallery, and restaurant and cafe area. Despite the busy functional scheme, the facilities evoke the feeling of lightness,

brightness and openness onto the outside and inside, as well as a sense of integration with public squares and the immediate surroundings.

According to the Jury, „*The prize was awarded for the form and the atmosphere of public space. The open and adaptable form of the building, its multiple spaces, a wall as a multimedia projector screen, as well as integration with the appealing function of the square are all a good example of how to create a modern ‘pop-cultural’ meeting place within the urban space.*”



Inspirations – Renzo Piano.

Renzo Piano is an eminent architect who combines a great talent with equally great involvement, modesty and a sense of responsibility. His outlook on architecture is best evidenced by his own words:

“Firstly, architecture is a service, in the most literal sense of the term. [...] But it is also a socially dangerous art, because it is an imposed art. You can put down a bad book; you can avoid listening to bad music; but you cannot miss the ugly tower block opposite your house. Architecture imposes total immersion in ugliness; it does not give the user a chance.”

When accepting the Pritzker Prize in 1998, Piano described architects as explorers. This is what he answered to the following question: “Do you take an idea or a line and rework it or are you always looking for the new?”

Renzo Piano: “I think it’s important to note the difference between style and coherence. If you’re talking about coherence, I love it. If you’re talking about style, then I start to be more suspicious. Coherence is about the experience, about using what you’ve been learning and

reapplying it. It's not about making yourself recognizable. But architecture is necessarily about exploring. Every place is different, every client is different, every society is different. Culturally, historically, psychologically, anthropologically, and topographically, every job is different. So the real risk is that as an architect you end up imposing your stamp before you understand what is the reality of a place. I never take a new job without visiting the place, without trying to understand, without trying to get a basic, fundamental emotion. Because that's what it's all about – building emotion. I try to understand what is the real nature of a place, what is the context. My goal is not necessarily to integrate with the context. Sometimes architecture should not integrate but should make a contribution to the context.”