



Shaping European Cities II Debate

Collateral Event of the 15th International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia

Press release

- The European Commission and the Fundació Mies van der Rohe presented the event “Shaping European Cities. Urban confrontation, democracy and identity” last Friday (28 October 2016) at Teatro Piccolo Arsenale in Venice.
- The debate was open to everybody interested in architecture and in the dialogue between architects, policy makers, politicians and representatives of other sectors.
- The event culminated in the Young Talent Architecture Awards ceremony, three winners receiving the prize that strives to bring the academic and professional realms closer together, awarding the best diploma projects from architecture schools across Europe.

In line with the topic of Biennale Architettura 2016, REPORTING FROM THE FRONT, the European Commission and the Fundació Mies van der Rohe organised a debate on the theme “Shaping European Cities. Urban confrontation, democracy and identity”. The participants discussed the role of architecture in fostering social inclusion, democratic participation and individual and societal well-being for city residents.

“Shaping European Cities. Urban confrontation, democracy and identity” counted with Damian Horner as moderator, who presented the event to an audience of **more than 180 people** at Teatro Piccolo Arsenale. **Damian Horner**, who has worked as a strategist for the last 15 years, **conducted the debate**. He played the role of the standard European citizen using architectonic heritage and public space without being an expert in the field.

Andrea Del Mercato, Director General of La Biennale di Venezia, delivered welcoming remarks and **Anna Ramos**, Director of the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, addressed the public highlighting the objectives of the newly created Young Talent Architecture Award, also shared by the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award: to recognise and share best architecture knowledge at all its stages.

Mircea Diaconu, Member of the European Parliament, vice-chair of the Committee on Culture and Education, expressed the European Parliament's support for quality architecture in the EU and **Michel Magnier**, Director for Culture and Creativity at the European Commission, outlined the context and themes of the debate.



The debate was divided into two panels:

Panel 1 entitled “Contemporary Architecture and Cultural Heritage” counted with the participation of **Tapani Mustonen (FI)**, architect, winner of a Europa Nostra Award 2015 for the restoration of Alvar Aalto’s Viipuri Library; **Małgorzata Omilanowska (PL)**, art historian and former Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Poland and **John Sell (UK)** architect and executive Vice-President of Europa Nostra.

The speakers debated on the challenges for contemporary architecture in European cities, which often include the **integration** into the historic environment, the **restoration** of built heritage and even the **reconstruction** of lost heritage. Various examples of such achievements were shown and discussed to highlight the fundamental questions of function (for what?) and end-users (for whom?) architects and urban planners should ask themselves. The case of the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion enabled to distinguish between reconstruction and replica explained by **Tapani Mustonen**.

In addition **John Sell** underlined the importance of being optimistic and to have “*sufficient confidence in the future*”. Similarly **Małgorzata Omilanowska** highlighted the “*lack of trust in contemporary architecture*” versus the myth of past identity often expressed by politicians and citizens.

After the panel discussion **the floor was opened to the public**, which raised some other interesting topics such as the **landscape heritage**, the **tourism issue** in the preservation of heritage in iconic cities like Barcelona, Venice or Prague among others.

Panel 2 “Public Space as a Resource for Cities” counted with the participation of **Kunlé Adeyemi (NI)**, architect, designer, urbanist and 2016 Silver Lion at Biennale Architettura; **Lieven Bertels (NL)** CEO and cultural Director of Leeuwarden-Fryslân 2018 European Capital of Culture; **Janez Koželj (SI)**, architect and deputy mayor of Ljubljana, initiator of “vision of Ljubljana 2025” and **Marianne Sætre (NO)**, architect and project manager at Snøhetta, winner of the 2009 EU Mies Award for the National Opera in Oslo.

The debate focused on the role of public space in **democracy**, **social inclusion** and **cultural creation and participation**. The moderator, Damian Horner, stressed the relevance acquired by public space over the last years in Europe like, for instance, the plight of the refugees or the movement of “Indignados” in Spain.

For **Kunlé Adeyemi** it was important to take into account the point of view of people and the environment: “*we need a lot more intelligence to know how people behave. It’s not only about design, we have to observe*”. **Lieven Bertels** talked about the “*recycling*” of public space: “*if we look at the history of public spaces they have always been open projects for multiple activities*”. **Marianne Sætre** emphasized the role of landscape in the feeling of belonging and introduced other topics such as security, “**an emotional state of mind**”, and argued “*public spaces should take care of these psychological aspects*”. **Janez Koželj** put on the table the problem of the



dimensions of the public space related to the human or urban scale and the influence of traffic engineers in the planning of our European cities and their public spaces.

After the discussion **Damian Horner** gave the floor to the **audience**. “*We have social media, do we need public space?*”, “*Why do we call them public spaces and not social spaces?*” were some of the questions raised and discussed.

The debate “Shaping European Cities” closed with a number of reflections on the future challenges that distinguish the European territory from elsewhere. In addition the discussion has embraced a **broad view of architecture**, from the first steps of the profession to its maturation, its multidisciplinary and the dialogue with policy makers and other sectors.

The event culminated in the **Young Talent Architecture Awards (YTAA)** ceremony, three winners receiving the prize that strives to bring the academic and professional realms closer together, awarding the best diploma projects from architecture schools across Europe.

The YTAA is organized by the Fundació Mies van der Rohe with the support of the European Union programme Creative Europe. The three winners are:

- TOMASZ BROMA from Wydział Architektury Politechniki Wrocławskiej (PL)
- IWO BORKOWICZ from Faculteit Architectuur - KU Leuven (BE)
- POLICARPO DEL CANTO BAQUERA from ETSAM - Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (ES)

To find out more:

www.shapingeuropeancities.eu

<http://ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/>

www.ytaaward.com

Press Release YTAA Winners Announcement: http://www.ytaaward.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/YTAA_Winners-Announcement_Press-release.pdf

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Information and Press Office:

Miriam Giordano - Silvia Pujalte / Labóh

Tel.: +34 600591929 / +34 932151011

Mail: press@miesbcn.com