

**Europe's Best Buildings
Mies van der Rohe Award 2005
European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture**

27th April to 9th June 2006

Curators: Fundació Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona

Press tour: Wednesday 26th April 2006, 10.30 am

Opening: Wednesday 26th April 2006, 6.30 pm

Exhibition venue:

Wiener Städtische Allgemeine Versicherung AG

Ringturm Exhibition Centre

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Opening hours:

Monday to Friday: 9.00 am to 6.00 pm; admission free
(closed on public holidays and from 15th to 18th May)

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Photographic material is available on our website www.wienerstaedtsche.at (in the "Arts & Culture" section) and upon request.

The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award 2005 has been awarded to the highly regarded “Netherlands Embassy in Berlin” by architects Rem Koolhaas and Ellen van Loon (Office for Metropolitan Architecture). Between 27th April and 9th June 2006, the ARCHITEKTUR IM RINGTURM series of exhibitions presents the winning project, the project awarded the Emerging Architect Special Mention and a selection of 31 further projects from the 242 submissions for this renowned award. The exhibition covers all areas of architectural endeavour from creative interventions in the landscape and public works via university facilities, sports centres and administrative buildings all the way to forward-looking work in the field of detached family homes, residential blocks and ecclesiastical architecture.

This competition, inaugurated by the European Union in conjunction with the Mies van der Rohe Foundation, is held every two years. Its purpose is to honour outstanding achievement by European architects. The projects in the competition are proposed for the jury’s consideration by a group of independent experts in contemporary architecture from all over Europe, the member associations of the Architects’ Council of Europe and other national and European architectural associations.

The jury chooses one project from all the nominations to receive the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award.

The winning project receives a cash prize (50,000 euros) and a sculpture by Catalan artist Xavier Corberó. Another sculpture and a special prize of 10,000 euros is awarded to a work by an emerging architect in recognition of outstanding conceptual, technological or constructional achievement. The jury also selects a number of exemplary projects for inclusion in a catalogue and exhibition.

The jury’s decision: the nine-member international jury, chaired by the 2003 winner, Zaha Hadid whittled down a total of 242 nominations to a shortlist of just five. In addition to the winning project, **The Netherlands Embassy in Berlin** by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) / Rem Koolhaas and Ellen van Loon, the shortlist comprised: the **Forum 2004 Esplanade and Photovoltaic Plant** (Barcelona) by José Antonio Martínez Lapeña and Elías Torres Tur; the **Braga Municipal Stadium** (Braga, Portugal) by Eduardo Souto de Moura; the **Selfridges & Co. Department Store** (Birmingham, United Kingdom) by Future Systems / Jan Kaplicky and Amanda Levete and the **Swiss Re Headquarters** (London, United Kingdom) by Foster and Partners.

These five projects were inspected by the jury and after meeting for a second time, the jury awarded the prize to the Netherlands Embassy in Berlin (OMA / Rem Koolhaas and Ellen van Loon).

The prize for most promising young architect (**Emerging Architect Special Mention**) was awarded to the NL Architects group / Pieter Bannenberg, Walter van Dijk, Kamiel Klaasse, Mark Linnemann for the **BasketBar** on the campus of Utrecht University (Netherlands). This award has an age limit of 40 at the time of completion of the nominated work and requires at least one further work to have been realised by the same architect(s). This project was part of a development plan by OMA for the university campus whose object was to form university-related architectural clusters comprising a combination of existing buildings and new structures. The jury found that “NL Architects have demonstrated an ability to create innovative and visually surprising structures.” The project is an extension of an existing bookshop. The projecting flat roof of the ground floor extends beyond the vanishing lines of the neighbouring buildings. The remarkable flatness of the building is emphasised by its oversized roof. On top of the roof is a basketball court; below it an elegant bar with a sporting theme. The bar has been sunk into the ground. All its external façades are glazed and combine the intimacy of a traditional bar space with extensive views. An orange “pool” outside the bar invites people to linger in what is a combination of sunken terrace, mini-amphitheatre and access route for the disabled. The bar’s extra-large roof offers a perfect site for a basketball court, which is surrounded by a seven-metre-high cage fence.

Particularly gratifying for **Austria** is the inclusion of four buildings on the list of those to be featured in the catalogue and exhibition. These are **Kunsthau Graz** by Peter Cook and Colin Fournier; the **T-Center St. Marx** in Vienna by Günther Domenig, Hermann Eisenköck and Herfried Peyker; the **Children's Museum in Graz** by fasch&fuchs and the **EFAFLEX Administrative Centre in Baden**, Lower Austria, by ARTEC / Bettina Götz and Richard Manahl.

The winning project: the **Netherlands Embassy in Berlin** by OMA / Rem Koolhaas and Ellen van Loon. The jury observed that the embassy building represents a powerful rethinking of both embassy design and urban planning. It emphasised the validity of OMA's decision neither to be subservient to the urban grid nor to create a solitary, free-standing monument but instead to create an extremely carefully designed structure that leaves open the question of a government or country's identity. The jury's decision was further reinforced by a winding "trajectory" that "carves" its way through the hollow block (offering artfully framed views of the city and creating a succession of seductive spaces) combined with an inventive use of diverse materials and varied optical effects.

The client wanted a free-standing building that would meet conventional civil service security needs while also espousing typical Dutch openness. Traditional (former West Berlin) urban planning guidelines demanded that the new building complete a city block in 19th-century fashion. The (former East Berlin) planning authorities looked favourably on the architects' plan to mount a free-standing cube on a plinth that would effectively complete the block, meaning that a combination of both basic requirements could be realised.

The embassy building is a glass cube on the bank of the River Spree. The transparent main building is a free-standing unit framed by an L-shaped wing (containing embassy staff apartments and infrastructure) whose punched metal façade resembles a kind of curtain.

A key element of the building is its continuous walkway that rises through all eight floors from the foyer to the roof. This "trajectory" was so to speak carved out of the cube with the workspaces taking up the "leftover areas" along the façade. It is a unifying element that affords visitors open views into the world of the embassy where they would normally be presented with a series of closed doors. The reception areas are located in the interior of the cube while the semi-public rooms have been placed in the façade area and in the part of the building that projects out over the main entrance. From the entrance, the path leads past a library, meeting rooms and a fitness area as it makes its way up to a roof terrace restaurant whose roof opens to provide an unencumbered view of the sky. In places the path leads through the outer skin on a glazed gangway and at others offers views of the levels below through a green glass floor. It also provides unusual views of the Spree, the Fernsehturm (television tower) and the park. In addition, a skybox projecting from the façade (and offering views of the city) serves as a special conference room.

A wide range of materials has been used including glass, perforated metal, steel, wood and stone. The overall effect achieved is one of lightness, airiness and dynamism, lending the project an anti-monumental character.

The "trajectory" also serves as the main air duct, conveying fresh air to the offices which is in turn drawn off by the double façade. This ventilation concept is part of a general strategy to integrate several functions within one element. This same strategy is applied to the structural concept. The internal walls adjacent to the trajectory are load-bearing beams that cross over each other to a sufficient extent to displace and therefore reduce the loads. This allows big open spaces to be created on the building's lower floors. Load-bearing glass panels, designed to fall out in the event of fire while the basic structure remains intact, support the floor slabs at the point where the trajectory meets the façade.

Between the "cube" and the "residential wing", which are linked by an access road, there is a courtyard with ample open space. This area offers a panoramic view of the Spree and the park. In order to emphasise the difference between the embassy and the surrounding buildings, which are faced with stone, the plinth and the wall of the "residential wing" are clad with aluminium.

The exhibition: the exhibition “Europe’s Best Buildings 2005” was first shown in Paris. After stopping off in Madrid and Barcelona, this travelling exhibition is now coming to the Ringturm Exhibition Centre in Vienna – just in time to coincide with Austria’s presidency of the EU Council. On display are the winning project, the winner of the Emerging Architect Special Mention and 31 further projects. The richness of the architectural scene in Europe is brought alive through plans, photographs and 27 architectural models.

Catalogue (English and Spanish): European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture. Mies van der Rohe Award 2005 / Premio de Arquitectura Contemporánea de la Unión Europea; 256 pages with numerous illustrations; Actar Press, Barcelona 2005; Price: 35 euros.

Press releases and photographs relating to the ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTUM series of exhibitions can be found at <http://www.wienerstaedtische.at> in the “Arts & Culture” section.

The Exhibition projects

The Netherlands Embassy, Berlin, Germany (Winning Project)

OMA

Rem Koolhaas and Ellen von Loon

BasketBar, Utrecht, the Netherlands (Emerging Architect Special Mention)

NL Architects

Pieter Bannenberg, Walter van Dijk, Kamiel Klaasse, Mark Linnemann

Swiss Re Headquarters, London, United Kingdom

Foster and Partners

Selfridges & Co Department Store, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Future Systems Jan Kaplicky, Amanda Levet

Forum 2004 Esplanade and Photovoltaic Plant, Barcelona, Spain

Antonio Martínez Lapeña and Elías Torres Tur

Braga Municipal Stadium, Braga, Portugal

Eduardo Souto de Moura

T-Center St. Marx, Vienna, Austria

Architektur Consult ZT Günther Domenig, Hermann Eisenköck, Herfried Peyker

Efaflex Door Systems, Baden, Austria

ARTEC Architekten Bettina Götz, Richard Manahl

Ardennes Leather Factory and Tannery, Bogny sur Meuse, France

Patrick Berger, Jacques Anziutti

Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden

Cécile Brisac, Edgar Gonzalez

Kunsthhaus Graz, Graz, Austria

Peter Cook, Colin Fournier

Pedestrian Bridge and Capitania Building, Barcelona, Spain

Mamen Domingo, Ernest Ferré, A. C. Aparicio

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

EMBT / Enric Miralles, Benedetta Tagliabue; RMJM / M.A. Duncan, T.B. Stewart

Minicity Model Park, Antalya, Turkey

Emre Arolat, Gezin Evren, Elif Karaelmas, Cagri Yilmaz

Children’s Museum, Graz, Austria

Fasch&Fuchs, Hemma Fasch, Jakob Fuchs

Southeast Coastal Park, Barcelona, Spain

Foreign Office Architects Farshid Moussavi, Alejandro Zaera Polo, Lluís Viú Rebes, Pablo Ros, Sergio López-Pineiro, Daniel Valle

Millau Viaduct, Millau, France

Norman Foster, Michel Virlogeux

Ministry of Culture and Communication – Îlot des Bons Enfants, Paris, France

Francis Soler, Frédéric Druot

“Living Room” Detached Family House, Gelnhausen, Germany

Gabriela Seifert, Götz Stöckmann

Solenn’ House, Paris, France

Jean-Marc Ibos, Myrto Vitart

Restoration of the Martos Mill and Urban Development of the Balcón del Guadalquivir, Córdoba, Spain

Juan Navarro Baldeweg

Social Housing, Mulhouse, France

Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal

Kärsämäki Church, Kärsämäki, Finland

Lassila & Hirvilammi / Anssi Lassila

International Convention Centre of Barcelona, Spain

MAP Architekten / Josep Lluís Mateo

Ferrari Product Development Centre, Maranello, Italy

Massimiliano Fuksas

Sphinxes, Huizen, the Netherlands

Willem Jan Neutelings, Michiel Riedijk

Casa das Mudas Art Centre, Calheta, Madeira, Portugal

Paulo David Andrade

Monastery of Our Lady of Novy Dvur, Teplá u Touzím, Czech Republic

John Pawson

Maritime Youth House, Copenhagen, Denmark

PLOT / Bjarke Ingels, Julien de Smedt

Town Hall, Henningsdorf, Germany

sauerbruch hutton architekten

Matthias Sauerbruch, Louisa Hutton, Jens Ludloff, Juan Lucas Young

Vista, Dungeness, United Kingdom

Simon Conder

An Turas Ferry Shelter, Isle of Tiree, United Kingdom

Sutherland Hussey Architects / Charlie Sutherland, Charlie Hussey

UBU – Utrecht University Library, Utrecht, the Netherlands

Wiel Arets & Associates / Wiel Arets