

Estonian Academy of Arts  
New Building International Architecture  
Competition

# Jury report

April 4, 2008

**The Jury of the Architectural Competition for the New Building of the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA) decided by simple majority to distribute the prizes accordingly:**

**I Prize** competition entry with the keyword **“ART PLAZA”**

**II Prize** competition entry with the keyword **“TLN 247”**

**III Prize** competition entry with the keyword **“ARTS FACTORY”**

**Purchase Prize** competition entry with the keyword **“PUBLICSECTION”**

**Purchase Prize** competition entry with the keyword **“SASHIMI”**

# Open Competition

The contest for the architectural solution of the new academic building of the Estonian Academy of Arts was declared in order to find the best architectural and functional solution for the building that will be the core of Estonian art life in the future. In addition to the skilful supplementation of the existing cityscape and an outstanding architectural appearance, the submitted projects were expected to have a perspective towards the future, being ecological and sustainable in essence. We were looking for a building that would not be fixed in form and inflexible, but for one that could easily undergo internal restructuring when needed. We were looking for a building where art could be created and which would itself become part of the created art through the continuous creative process.

Altogether, 96 projects were submitted for the contest. It is difficult to underestimate the body of spatial ideas they contain. The majority of the projects had been created on a highly professional level and with a sufficient degree of elaboration. Therefore, it was the spatial ideas they contained that started to compete before the jury. Since an idea in itself isn't viable without further development, neither were the selected top ideas. Below, the jury wishes to highlight some ideas that emerged in the discussions held during the assessment of the projects.

## Remarks of the Jury regarding the awarded entries:

### **I PRIZE: COMPETITION ENTRY WITH THE KEYWORD "ART PLAZA"**

Voting results: 8 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 1 impartial vote

The Jury voted Art Plaza as the winner of the competition because it is by far the best proposal when it comes to the architectural concept, its outer qualities and inner life. The project is stunningly simple and at the same time fascinatingly complex.

In making the final decision, the sustainability of the project was essential for the Jury: the plans of Art Plaza are flexible enough that they can be technologically transformed and their construction logic allows the use of many different solutions. At the same time, Art Plaza has one of the lowest long-term maintenance and construction costs of the proposed solutions.

The authors were brave to cast aside the plan of restrictions and the "envelope" idea. However, unlike many others who chose the same direction, these authors came up with a sensitive urban solution that is elegant and communicates with its surroundings. In the end, this justified the risk taken and brought success to the competition entry.

The outer shape is a beautifully proportioned square tower.

Downtown Tallinn is dominated by visually "noisy" buildings screaming at each other. In this chaos, Art Plaza bravely disregards the described "envelope" and suggests erecting a quiet, calm and perfect tower with only half the footprint of the site, liberating a 4000m<sup>2</sup> plaza in the heart of Tallinn.

A plaza is not defined by its perimeter but by its life and the events that take place on it. This plaza

will stand out as a unique place in downtown Tallinn, filled with students and art. Art plaza will become the new living room of Tallinn.

The 4 facades become individual due to the spiraling sky-plazas, opening the building up from the inside. The tower is constantly changing expression and form when one moves through the city. The façade is decorated by a simple but very varied structural ornament that plays with light and shadow in the façade. The stabilizing core and the façade are the building's only two vertical elements, allowing completely flexible plans.

It is a compact, yet light building, making it sustainable and affordable – the jury's experts even pointed to it as one of the most cost efficient.

The spiral void is the heart of the building.

The corkscrew movement connects the entire building and creates 4 public plazas with stunning views of the entire city. The building has one plaza to each corner of the world – East, West, North, and South. The sky plazas open up the building from within, creating an art academy in constant dialogue with the city - a modern open academy that interacts with society and the world.

The experience of being in the building will be similar to living inside a sculpture of space. Each floor is ca 1600m<sup>2</sup> and completely flexible. It is an open structure, filled with light and stunning views of the city. Functionally, each floor can be its own entity, allowing students to focus on their work, but the floors are also tied together with the rest of the academy through the spiral atrium. As by magic, concentration and communication are unified in a beautiful architectonic duet.

The project has the potential of becoming an international masterpiece, the beacon of Estonia, attracting people from all over the world to see the art academy of the future – a calm sculpture in the roar of downtown Tallinn.

### **Jury recommendations**

The Jury, as well as the experts emphasise the necessity of carrying out the sustainable aspect of the concept in its construction and planning. The Jury finds that employing a very good contractor is a prerequisite for guaranteeing that the character of the architecture can be effective.

The plans for Art Plaza are schematic, apparently because of the principle that the rooms are easily changeable. In the planning process, it is, however, necessary to draft a more thorough functional scheme and spatial programme. The architects must demonstrate how the open floors will cater to the needs of rooms that are shown as closed in the spatial programme.

Also, when planning the technological systems of the building, the architects must take into account the use of different innovative technologies for making the building energy efficient.

The actual requirements for the elevators and communications technology in the heart of the building have to be more precise. The projected core is obviously too small.

The technology of workshops and classrooms has to be reviewed and planned according to the

requirements of different rooms. The workshops have to be divided between different departments and they have to be located in the immediate vicinity of classrooms and studios (for a comparison, see the competition entry Publicsection).

The façade has to have an intelligent plan, with a solar screen and natural ventilation. The atrium should be a fresh air “chimney”, filled with people, plants and sculpture.

The Jury recommends that the building will be constructed of rough “factory” like materials, which can sustain the lively experimentation of an art school.

The core is too small. 3-4 more elevators are required.

The workshops should be mixed with classrooms and studios - distributed to the different departments (see the project Publicsection for reference).

The plaza should be developed functionally and spatially to host exhibitions and events where covered tents and seating are used. The architects must find a way to connect the plaza to open urban spaces. Solutions should be proposed to how the plaza will be divided into open, semi-open and publicly closed spaces that could be used only by students, if necessary. It should be investigated thoroughly whether the plaza should be going down or lead directly up to the foyer. The main entrance needs to be emphasised.

## **II PRIZE: COMPETITION ENTRY WITH THE KEYWORD “TLN 247”**

Voting results: 7 votes in favour, 2 votes against, 0 impartial votes.

The clear form and elegant sleekness of the project fits logically into the cityscape. The web-like limestone stripes of the façade give reasonable ground to hope that the building might become a symbol. The corner facing the crossroads can be blamed for inadequate communication with the city. The entrance, although slightly hidden, is nevertheless solved as a pleasant semi-public city space in the area between the school and City Plaza. The solution enables to use the Southern side in warmer weather. Problems may appear in winter with the clearing of snow and the large surface to be heated. The entrance is also logically opened to Gonsiori Street. The giant section cut out of the web of the façade offers a view to the lively interior of the building and links it to the cityscape by revealing the school's heart. The limestone cover of the façade is inappropriate from a practical perspective and its connection to the knitted traditional pattern is formal.

Through different floors it is possible to remain mentally connected to the central public area. The first few floors adhere to the common space conception. The connection fails on top floors where long and narrow hallways are formed. The location of vertical connections at the ends of the building is definitely inappropriate, taking into consideration the need to use several elevators simultaneously. For the basement floor accommodating the workshops, a good natural light solution has been found through the outer perimeter of the building. This way it is possible to provide at least minimal lighting for some of the workshops.

The plans are functionally well situated but could be more intriguing; the long hallways of top floors and the disproportionate rooms weaken the integral picture. Possible changes in the design of the

building are not easily accomplished, because the form of the building is clearly determined. The capacity of the building has been compressed, compared to others, due to the necessary programme, which is unacceptable. The lack of space in this project is obviously not easy to eliminate.

### **III PRIZE: COMPETITION ENTRY WITH THE KEYWORD “ARTS FACTORY”**

Voting results: 6 votes in favour, 3 votes against, 0 impartial votes

The project Arts Factory is composed of two floors for common space and above these the individual departments are located in clearly cut cubes.

The members of the Jury are intrigued by the clear standpoint of the authors, which is expressed in an articulate way. The project does not look like a school nor does it look like an office building, instead it resembles a factory or even a power station, at first sight. Giving it a closer look, one notices this is indeed an arts academy, especially with the multilayered façade having silk-screen patterns and writing with clear reference to the function of the building.

The entrance and the public zones with cafeteria, canteen, black box and further common spaces on ground floor level are well situated and have a clear layout. Also, the placement of the library onto the first floor is appreciated by the Jury, whereas the strong differentiation between public zones on the first two floors from the semi-public departments and administration above does not find the unanimous support of the Jurors.

The basic idea of working together in one space is contradicted in a certain way by situating the departments in individual cubes. A problem would also occur when departments are reorganized in future or new departments would have to be taken up. Then the organisation of space would pose a problem. On the other hand, the Jury acknowledges the fact that this volumetric articulation might encourage new “neighbourhoods” between the departments.

The Jury appreciates the general standpoint of the authors, proposing this building to have a factory-like atmosphere, as it should be a place to work, to make a mess, to have exhibitions, a place where one should not hesitate to put a nail into the wall.

In downtown Tallinn there is no comparable building, neither with this function, nor with this very specific articulation.

### **PURCHASE PRIZE: COMPETITION ENTRY WITH THE KEYWORD „PUBLICSECTION“**

Voting results: 8 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 1 impartial vote

The authors of the competition entry titled “Publicsection” chose a solution, where a simple, perfect cube-like form is placed, similarly to the winning entry, to the Southeast of the site, allowing a construction of an open city park to the crossing of Gonsiori and A. Laikmaa streets. The Jurors were happy to note that the authors did not merely create an empty space, but designed pavilion-like structures, which the EAA could use year-round, creating by it a direct contact with the students and citizens. At the same time, the chosen volume appears bulky and heavy in the urban space due to its geometric orderliness.

A second strong idea was found with the inner trans-floor flowing stairway, which is used as a meeting place, but in case of necessity can be divided into auditoriums, a main hall and a black box by sliding walls/doors. The model demonstrates the emphasis of the stairway throughout the whole perimeter of the façade, which communicates with the outside space. Since the description of the façade is very general in the entry documents, it is unfortunately unclear, which architectural methods are used to achieve that effect. The visual transition of the stairway into street space on the first level, where the street suddenly becomes a stage, is fascinating. The choice of direction for the ascending stairway caused confusion – it would have felt more logical to direct the stairway to the open plaza and along Gonsiori Street. The placement of the black box onto the stairways was met by criticism – considering the function of the space, such a solution would not work.

Thirdly, the Jurors remarked the clear and compact two-light-well main plan, which guarantees the flexibility of room placement, necessary for EAA. A clear constructive scheme and the simple form create a presumption that the building cost of the structure would be quite low; also, according to the expert assessment, the building could be made energy-efficient. The solution for the -1 level is unsuccessful because the spaces for study purposes are left completely without natural daylight. The authors dealt with the possibility of building the structure in two phases, but in the given case, this would not be feasible – the necessity of temporary structural elements is too great and the organising of the construction too complex.

In conclusion – the competition entry “Publicsection” offers interesting ideas both in urban and interior design, while connecting the spatial programme with a constructive simplicity and energy-efficiency. However, the intangible “something” akin to EAA is still missing...

#### **PURCHASE PRIZE: COMPETITION ENTRY WITH THE KEYWORD „SASHIMI“**

Voting results: 6 votes in favour, 3 votes against, 0 impartial votes

Sashimi has done what no one else succeeded with and turned the restrictive building “envelope” into a natural foundation for the project.

Other projects look tortured by the circumstances, but Sashimi has effortlessly broken free from the limiting outer demand and fulfilled the requirement to perfection.

The project brings an important point to the competition - that following boundaries and rules should never be enough in itself. But it can be used as a springboard for creativity and new solutions if turned around or upside down. The plans and sections are not at the same level. As presented, they are schematic and incoherent in relation to the shape.

All in all a talented work that shows a great sense of shape and style.

**Signed by:**

Chairman of the Jury

Rector of the Estonian Academy of Arts, Prof Signe Kivi

**Jurors:**

Vice Chairman of Union of Estonian Architects, architect Indrek Allmann

EAA Professor Emeritus Veljo Kaasik

EAA Dean of Faculty of Art Culture, Prof Mart Kalm

Ülar Mark, architect

Tallinn City Chief Architect, Endrik Mänd

Roger Riewe, architect, Riegler Riewe Architects Pty. Ltd., Austria

Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Prof Jüri Soolep

David Zahle, architect, Bjarke Ingels Group, Denmark

**Secretaries of the Jury:**

Kaire Pärnpuu, UEA

Pille Epner, UEA