

Jury Report FAKRO

FAKRO Fusion – Before and After

Introduction

Light is one of the most important components of architecture, it always have been. With light, atmospheres can be created, spaces can be defined, and the playfulness combination of light and shadows can transform our perception of any space. This is essential to define the character of a space and our understanding of it. This can only be done by the appropriate combination between natural and artificial light.

In many cities, density doesn't allow the construction of new buildings, rather there is a relevant need of rehabilitation, to reuse old, derelict, and sometimes forgotten spaces, and transform them into well designed spaces that will be able to fulfil the current spacial needs in the urban environment. The range of scales can be as diverse as complex are our cities, so for this competition there's no limit to the imagination, they can be ateliers, apartment, or larger cultural projects, as long as they use light as an element of design.

For a space to be livable, the transitions and combinations between shadows and light, between interior and exterior, are important. And these elements are also relevant for the spacial quality of any architecture project.

Jury: Ethel Baraona-Pohl (critic, writer and curator, co-founder of dpr-barcelona) Rafal Pieszko (architect at menthol architects), and Sławomir Gawlik (FAKRO)

The competition

For the current edition of the FAKRO competition, entitled FAKRO fusion - before and after, the challenge for the participants has been to select and old, abandoned —some times residential, perhaps industrial— spaces, and transform them into a well designed, usable and provocative project, including lighting design as an essential element of the proposal. To reach that goal, it is important that lighting design includes both artificial and natural light, and for the latter, to be able to incorporate some FAKRO elements in the proposal.

We received 52 proposals from different countries, including Iran, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Russia, The Netherlands, Belgium, Catania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Qatar, Germany, Serbia, Romania, Vietnam, Australia, Belarus, Philippines, Thailand, France, Lebanon, USA, and Poland. The history and daily life on these diverse countries was something reflected in the competition entries, with a special focus on small apartments and domestic attics, an architectural type that is common and transversal to all of them.

We received some proposals that provoked reflections and debate about the possible impact of architecture in social and political issues, and how can architecture engage its agency in order to solve some current cultural needs; as we were able to see in one project with the aim to revisit the historical memory of a city by the rehabilitation of an abandoned underground bunker used during the Lebanese Civil War. The participant summarised our idea of 'before and after' by defining our human relationship within history, architecture and light, when he stated "The whole journey acts as a metaphor representing the dark past, the struggling present, and the bright future." At this point I would like to remark that it is quite important to note that some of this projects would not be possible without the appropriate products, like — in this case— the FAKRO roof windows.

But furthermore, we consider that the wide range of existing FAKRO products are also a catalyst for the imagination, as some of this product hasn't been only used, but also transformed and adapted depending on the needs of the projects.

Old cities with a long historical, cultural, and architectural memory can be the perfect framework for some rehabilitation projects. We were empathetic with some projects that presented an accurate and deep research of the current state of the buildings that the participants intend to transform for the competition, even if in some cases, the research was so important and well documented that we had the feeling that it left small space and perhaps small time, to find a proper response to the competition challenge as a holistic project. But certainly, we need to clarify that these are the less of the cases, and we found remarkable the ability of some participants to make the right balance between research and proposal, an equilibrium that is necessary to understand the problems of the selected site, and further the response given through the architectural proposal.

It was quite curious —and we're still thinking on the possible reasons— to realize that we as architects, haven't been taught to communicate good ideas in a simple way. There are several projects with a strong proposal that get weakened by an excess of drawings, renders or even, words. The density of some of the panels didn't permit a proper understanding of the concepts and ideas behind certain projects; but still we're quite positive by the overall vision of the received submissions.

It has been a very positive experience to be jury of this competition, to travel through the eyes of the participants to many different locations with such diversity of social and cultural contexts, and find inspiration through their projects.

Criteria

FAKRO stated the following regarding the entries submitted:

- using dark and forgotten space and designing in its place, functional interior full of natural light, interior arrangement with light “light-shadow” in the interior design
- applying to the project any windows available in FAKRO product range (sloping and flat roofs), showing the interior before and after applying FAKRO products
- the internal area of windows used in the project should be at least 20% of the floor surface in the room
- presenting the object before and after renovation in the form of photos, renderings, visualisations, rebuilding projects, sketches

As a jury, the team decided to give value to the human element, the inhabitant, trying to understand the emotions and quality of life that the use and combination of natural and artificial light can provide to the user of the space. This can be analysed from:

- Projects that provide different visions of the space, by the use of some binaries like interior/exterior, day/night, summer/winter.
- Projects that push and transform the product in order to give new ideas for further research
- Projects that reflect on social, cultural, and historical context; and are not afraid to ask the proper questions.

The aforementioned facts have not been mandatory and in any case, a precondition to evaluate the proposals. They just add value by understanding FAKRO research not only as technical innovations, but as products which can enhance the quality of life through architecture.

The winners

FIRST PRIZE

EUR 5000,-

The Natural Library | Warat Rodpechprai

The project approach can be found almost in any city in the world. Pollution, food contamination, and hunger are a 'new normal' nowadays and the jury found interesting how a context-based project could possibly be extrapolated to find solutions to the same problem in other cities around the world. The idea of reusing and adapt an old railway repair center is also a metaphor about the impact of mobility and our means of transportation in a global scale. The multi-scalar approach of the project is also remarkable, because instead of proposing a huge, massive project, the participant envisioned different uses for the abandoned buildings (including old locomotives) to design four different spaces that complement each other. Even more, the poetical spirit of the project lies not only on the notion of a 'seed library', but it also has not only an impact in the urban environment, the urban flora and fauna (by default), but also in the way that people can use this kind of public spaces: to enjoy, but also to learn.

SECOND PRIZE

EUR 3000,-

Zenith Light | Morgan Baufiles

The symbolic representation of this project was the first thing that captured our interest. But getting in deep, it's a project that has the challenge to transform a space in the city center of Bordeaux, where density and access to natural light are a constrain as in many European cities. Thus, the proposal instead of following the easy trend of being transformed in to a car parking, proposes a different way to [re]conquer the city, by giving new use to an old and tiny industrial space with a clear approach to solve the needs of young people, which barely have access to work spaces in city centers, due to economical reasons and the high prices of renting an space in the city. The project proposed mixed uses for a small space, which it's quite a challenge, solved with elegance supporting the division of space with the use of zenith light, creating an atmosphere quite appropriate to work, read, and learn.

THIRD PRIZE

EUR 2000,-

The New Bunker. Let There be Light. | Tracy Bassil

The social, political, and cultural approach of the project, that proposes the rehabilitation of an abandoned underground bunker used during the Lebanese Civil War, it's quite remarkable in a world where we have the tendency to erase the past and make a tabula rasa before starting from the scratch every time we talk about the built environment. Apart from the political agency of the project, it's also worth to mention in a more technical way, how the diversity of FAKRO projects can be used and adapted for different goals. The easy solution for an underground project would have been to use only artificial light, but the use of light tunnels provide access to natural light is also a way to confront past and future, represented here by shadows and light. Poetry is served, and the political statement as well.

Special mentions

Music High School | Zdravko Barisic

Reusing a building built 200 years ago to create a Music High School it's quite a perfect approach, because it combines the possibility of historical preservation of an industrial building, while at the same time the materials and structure of this kind of buildings can easily be adapted for cultural approaches.

Underground | Marta Ciesielska

Transforming a craft workshop space into a useful living space it's quite a challenge, with a successful transformation mostly based on the symmetrical roof, which allows the use of FAKRO windows to bring natural light into the space.

Hayden Flour Mill | Jeffrey Clancy

The large scale project intends to rehabilitate an abandoned flour mill in a growing business center and university sites. It is interesting to note that the proposal goes beyond the building, and due to the land use of the area, also proposes uses for the public space surrounding the building.

Attic Transformation | Dominika Trzcinska

The project uses FAKRO roof window in order to bring life and wellness to an old abandoned attic. The project preserves the wooden columns creating a wonderful coexistence between old and new, with a contemporary atmosphere.

Loft in New Belgrade | Jovana Radujko

The space located in a residential building with scarce access to natural light is transformed into a domestic space where the surface of the roof is transformed with FAKRO windows to create a space in between an apartment and a gazer window.

—Congrats to all the winners and shortlisted projects!!

Selection procedure

All plans were submitted with a number and a motto/title and therefore judged anonymously.

Fifty two participants submitted projects successfully, apart from those that did not meet the technical requirements (incomplete entry, past the deadline, not anonymous, no use of FAKRO products).

First round:

From those 52 projects, a group of 16 passed through the next round. The ones that didn't pass this step, found themselves among this circumstances:

- Were lacking architectural quality compared to the other entries.
- Didn't provide enough information to really evaluate the changes of the space 'before and after' the intervention
- Did not mention a specific type of FAKRO product
- Did not sufficiently push the qualities of the product or the limits of imagination

In the second round we judged the remaining 16 submissions:

At this step we focused on the creative exchange of ideas that a competition like this can provide. We found that even some projects had a good quality, there was an average of conservative projects, in the sense that didn't propose any radical change or imaginative use of FAKRO products.

Third round:

For this round we had 8 projects that made a fertile ground for discussions an intense debate within the jury members, and we selected those projects that provided innovative responses to the urban and architectural challenges we have nowadays in our cities, while at the same time made good or provocative use of FAKRO products.