MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Architecture is political. The question is whether or not you acknowledge that fact. Once a graduate and part of the real world, you find yourself operating within a political system. As a person and as a designer, you can decide if you want to recognize this system. We have gone through periods in architecture where the political was not recognized. It was ignored. Now it is interesting to see it creeping back into some of the projects through proposed design strategies. Looking at the 320 projects, one cannot help notice how architectural discourse is still defined by Western conceptions. How refreshing to see some projects challenge this situation.

Almost every graduation project is fictional. In their choice of topic, in how research is conducted, and in how this acquires form in a design proposal, architects, urban designers and landscape architects demonstrate their intellectual stance, engagement, position within the discourse. They can reflect and respond through the graduation project. But there is a pitfall. Many designers seem to think that architecture will produce something positive. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. A critical view of the role of architecture is therefore necessary, and not only in the process of graduating.

In this edition of the Archiprix International, some subjects seemed popular, among them museums, cemeteries and places of memory, and some subjects were scarcely touched. For example, how design can be deployed to address everyday problems such as mass housing, or aging. Or how design can help in tackling issues such as climate change and inequality. These are no easy themes for a graduation project, but they are very important nonetheless.

Among the reviewed projects were some excellently drawn schemes made with various techniques and set in certain traditions. The designers of these projects understand the power of representation as a tool for exploring architectural ideas. What the winning projects have in common, apart from being excellent presentations, is an ability to combine social, political and contextual elements with innovative programmes, a critical engagement with the discourse, and restraint in the design process.

The winners of the Hunter Douglas Awards 2019:

185 EN-COUNTERS IN KARM EL-ZEITOUN
Designed by Mohamad Nahleh - Maroun Semaan - Faculty of Engineering and Architecture – Beirut, Lebanon - From the narrow balcony of a house to the streets of Beirut, the study follows the escape of a migrant domestic worker after she used her appropriated space to silently challenge the environment that was forced upon her. The project reveals a method of materializing the power of dwellers and their spaces in the form of architectural interventions by devising a series of public installations. The 185 interventions are positioned on leftover plots. They benefit from the insignificance of residual plots by injecting within them seemingly innocent public spaces that provoke abusive interference. The exploration culminates in a 1:1 site implementation of one of the interventions.

The jury: This 'mapping' project displays great sensitivity towards the city of Beirut, and the understanding of the needs of dwellers in this particular part of Beirut. It is socially minded, without goody-goody intentions. The project suggests a new form of political activism through the appropriation of urban residual spaces. Design is instrumentalized and directly tested in order to challenge legal, social, and political assumptions. The project is very thorough. The proposals, all different, are situated in real contexts. One proposal is built. The designer chose to build the simplest object, though he could have elected to build a more spectacular object. With this choice, the designer displayed restraint.

INFRASTRUCTURAL LANDSCAPE AND ECOSYSTEM REGENERATION - *Designed by Guelba Paiva - Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, PUC-Rio - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil* - The project is set in Caatinga, in north-eastern Brazil. It is one of the richest dry forests in the world, and a major eco-region. Deforestation poses serious problems for the people of the area. The project reflects upon concepts of identity, territory and resistance, and investigates the design of a versatile nature-based infrastructure capable of meeting both landscape and socio-economic demands. The aim is to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure sustainable socio-economic development by restoring the deforested areas and simultaneously preserving local culture and identity.

The jury: Many of the landscape projects can be defined as architects planting trees. They don't represent landscape but architecture. This project is different. Nothing new is proposed, but what makes it stand out from all the other projects is that it is about the long process of regeneration. The project is not about

FOLLOWING UP THE FOREGOING
Designed by Maarten de Haas - Academy of Architecture and Urban Design - Rotterdam, the Netherlands - In the centre of Rotterdam rises a gold-coloured monolith on top of an important data artery. The building houses a data centre. The caretaker's home occupies a niche and is deteriorating slowly. The data centre, living conditions and daily routine of the caretaker confront us with the human condition of our time: an existence caught between the virtual and the sensorial, the all-inclusive and the personal, the managed and the accidental.

The jury: In this 'narrative' project, architecture is deployed to tell the story of a social phenomenon and discuss the condition of daily life. People constantly produce junk data and share it with others they might not even know. Millions of photos, homemade videos, emails and so on are sent through thick wires and stored in the 'cloud', which materializes as gigantic data centres. And someone – a real person, with real, day-to-day problems, expressed in the homely details of the caretaker's home – has to take care of this data centre and therefore of the data junk. Rather than illustrating a narrative, the design and its drawings construct a strong spatial narrative themselves, hereby also managing to provide an understated commentary on the representational conventions of an architectural project. The way the drawings and texts complement each other is beyond reproach. The project is made with precision and wit, it is highly original and sensitive.

the aesthetics of landscape but instead proposes a strategy and explains all the phases you have to go through. The designer starts with the community and doesn't scale up. It stays within its means. The project is thorough and totally feasible, and it is not made to convince clients but for the benefit of local inhabitants.

SYNTHETIC CULTURES. SCENES FROM THE POST-ANTHROPOCENE *Designed by Gary Polk - University of Pennsylvania, Faculty of Architecture – Pennsylvania, USA*
We are living in the Anthropocene, the geological period in which the earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans and systems of nutrient cycling are substantially and irreversibly being altered by human influence. This project is set in the period after that. It examines non-human culture's role within architecture. Six 'characters' are created and placed in a new conglomerated park made up of various National Parks in the United States. Through what narratives and design strategies can humans co-exist with a culture of autonomous architecture — irreducible to people or to machines, but one that serves itself while interfacing with humans and the environment to create mutually benefitting hybrid realms?

The jury: The narrative is a wonderful 'sci-fi' project. Not every project has to be plausible, and this one takes you out of your comfort zone. National Parks are a construction where the landscape is kept and preserved. By situating the objects in National Parks, which still seem to exist even as humans are disappearing, the designer comments on the American obsession with the parks. And he questions the role of people in the post-Anthropocene. The project is a fine example of conceptually clean, very synthetic, messy thinking.

TRYOUTS ON LIVING IN THE CITY: FOUR POSSIBLE HOMES - *Designed by Liran Messer, Stav Dror - Bezalel Academy of Art and Design Architecture - Jerusalem, Israel*
The project seeks to deepen our knowledge of housing in today's city. Observation and documentation of daily activities, objects and patterns of using the home and city allow us to neglect the concept of the home as a term and represent it as a flux of events, actions, places and objects. The home becomes a collectible and its parts replaceable. In such a home, structural elements such as the window, door, stairs, wall or ceiling undergo a process of objectification. They become units arranged in space. The home is freed from the basic spatial unit to accommodate constant changes in life and countless variations in living.

The jury: The designers make an architectural documentary. The project is an investigation into the use of drawing as a representational tactic to tell a little story about life. Although the project is more visual than conceptual, it sounds a critical note on modern life. Thinking about the concept of home is a compelling and urgent issue.

UN-UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS. NEUTRAL GROUND FOR DISCUSSING THE MORALITY OF OPPOSING POLITICAL SYSTEMS *Designed by Lesia Topolnyk - Academy of Architecture Amsterdam - Amsterdam, The Netherlands* - Located on the Crimean Peninsula claimed by both Russia and the Ukraine, the project explores the role of architecture in absorbing the conflict situation. Instead of the utopian idea of stability, the project proposes perpetual instability, a constantly renegotiated temporariness. The headquarters of the Un-United Nations functions as both a dividing wall and a gate. The underpinning logic is that unity is impossible as a stable final condition and 'the political' per definition implies potential conflict and therefore the need to debate. All outcomes of such debates are a temporary 'solution'. The heart of political institutions, the chamber, has become a decor for rehearsed dialogues, while all meaningful decisions take place in the informal spaces. That's why the project proposes a 'corridor-only' model.

The jury: Design thinking, a methodology that provides a solution-based approach to tackling complex problems, is used to relate design with politics. It is a strong project that intelligently tackles the agency of architecture on politics. The project is placed in a historical perspective and goes beyond actuality. The project is convincing in terms of scale and relationship with the landscape, ranging in scope and scale from global politics to a 1:1 facade detail. This is a mature and critical project.

WALICÓW, FORTRESS OF MEMORY. MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT BETWEEN WARSAW'S GHETTO RUINS - *Designed by Sara Pellegrini and Domenico Spagnolo - Politecnico di Milano, School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering - Milan, Italy* - In the centre of Warsaw, a few buildings and fragments of the Jewish Ghetto, established by the Nazis during the occupation of Poland, can still be found. This heritage needs to be preserved. The project proposes to rehabilitate and critically integrate three buildings from the early twentieth century. The design programme is based on a physical and conceptual excavation of the foundations of the city, activating a form of 'critical archaeology' that strengthens the identity of places of memory and their deep meanings. The outcome is a 'museum of the present' activated by the architecture of ethical responsibility.

The jury: At first glance, this might look like a nostalgic project about preservation, one of the many projects submitted to this edition of Archiprix International that deal with commemoration, memorials to what once happened or existed. But this project is not a memorial. Rather, it is programmed for the future, and it outlines the clear responsibility of architecture. It is an intellectually mature project that resonates with the now. What happened then could happen again today or tomorrow. The designers adopt a very clear position on ethics and urban form in the past and in the future. The text is beautifully written. They used the model for experimenting and were extremely restrained when it came to actual design.

POSTSCRIPT
Some advice from the jury to students about to embark on their graduation project. An interesting subject and good research doesn't automatically lead to a gripping proposal. Collecting and analysing information is an integral part of the design process. It is best to do this in tandem with actual design work.
- Strong projects accord equal importance to designing and writing. Make writing part of your design process.
- Consider adding photographs of your model to your presentation. And remember, an architectural model is not a miniature for a model railway.
- Videos can be a useful tool for presenting your project.
- To present your project clearly to an audience, you have to eliminate most of the work you produced. Kill your darlings.

JURY MEMBERS
- *Francisco Díaz* (Chile), *architect, assistant professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago de Chile, and general editor of ARQ Libros.*
- *Rosetta Elkin* (USA), *landscape architect, associate professor of landscape architecture at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, and faculty associate at Harvard Arnold Arboretum, USA.*
- *Marta Moreira* (Brazil), *architect, partner at MMBB and professor at Escola da Cidade, São Paulo, Brazil.*
- *Martino Tattara* (Italy), *architect, partner at Dogma, and assistant professor at KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture, Belgium.*
- *Sam Jacoby* (United Kingdom), *Research Leader of the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art and Director of the Projective Cities programme at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London.*

FACTS
Since 2001, the best graduation projects have been selected by 975 universities, 55 percent of all universities in the world! A total of 2543 graduation projects designed by 3178 young architects, landscape architects and urban designers have to date been submitted. Some 320 projects designed by 407 young and talented architects, landscape architects and urban designers were submitted for Archiprix International Chile 2019.

Before the jury meeting took place at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago de Chile October 2018, each jury member was asked to review a share of 64 projects online. During three days of jury deliberations, they reviewed the panels of all 320 projects and watched videos of the web presentations.

A total of 87 graduation projects made it into the first round, 52 of which were selected for the second round. Fruitful discussions took place among the jury members. In the third round, where some projects previously eliminated were reviewed again, the jury decided to nominate 22 projects. In the final round, 7 of these were selected as winners of the Hunter Douglas Award.