

The restoration of the Catharijnesingel canal in Utrecht, by OKRA landschapsarchitecten, declared winner of the 2022 European Prize for Urban Public Space

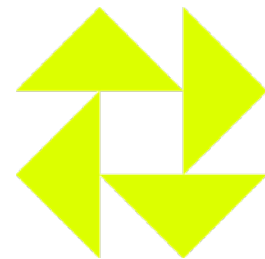
An international jury has awarded the 2022 European Prize for Urban Public Space to the restoration of the Catharijnesingel canal in Utrecht (Netherlands), a project by the Dutch studio OKRA landschapsarchitecten. The jury considers that the reconstruction of the canal, as well as the recovery of a linear park running along its banks, is an exemplary intervention for the survival of our cities in this new climate era.

The 11th edition of the European Prize for Urban Public Space, an initiative of the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre (CCCB), has seen a record number of entrants and widespread representation: 326 projects were submitted, from 35 different countries. The works presented for this edition highlight the problems shared by distinct European cities, and some of the solutions that have been proposed to try to deal with them. This is particularly relevant in the present, post-pandemic context: urban projects must address climate change and aim to make cities more liveable places, something that has become a central issue.

The European Prize for Urban Public Space is a biennial, honorific award which, since 2000, has recognised the best projects in terms of the creation, transformation and recovery of public spaces in European cities.

Barcelona, 15th November 2022. Today, at 18:30, the official award ceremony for the 11th edition of the **European Prize for Urban Public Space** took place at the CCCB. It was attended by **Núria Marín Martínez**, President of both the Provincial Deputation of Barcelona and of the CCCB. Also present at the ceremony were representatives of the projects selected as the five finalists.





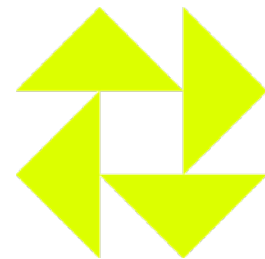
The international jury, presided by **Teresa Galí-Izard**, landscape designer, engineer and professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, awarded first prize to the restoration of the **Catharijnesingel** canal in Utrecht (Netherlands), by the Dutch studio OKRA landschapsarchitecten. It was selected from a total of 326 projects, from 35 different countries.

The jury considers that the reconstruction of the canal, as well as the recovery of a linear park running along its banks, is an exemplary intervention for the survival of our cities in this new climate era. The canal is crucial for building urban resilience in the city: it is increasing Utrecht's capacity to deal with extreme heat, storms and flooding, and the recovery of water and plant life helps capture carbon and reduce pollution. The canal has become a desirable and playful place to be, for the city's residents, and it has also created new habitats for other living beings.



The jury appreciates the fact that this intervention is part of a larger urban transformation, which looks to the future by bringing back elements from the city's past. The canal has been returned to its original state, after having been replaced, for more than fifty years, by a large highway. This project not only diminishes motorised traffic, but, and more importantly, it prioritises pedestrian mobility and social interaction, as well as porous surfaces and a rich biodiversity. These aspects are what make our cities healthy, sustainable and enjoyable. With this prize, the jury commends and congratulates the client, teams and stakeholders: this project could inspire a new standard for sustainable urban regeneration.





Winning project

Catharijnesingel, 2020. *Utrecht, Netherlands.*

Author: OKRA landschapsarchitect

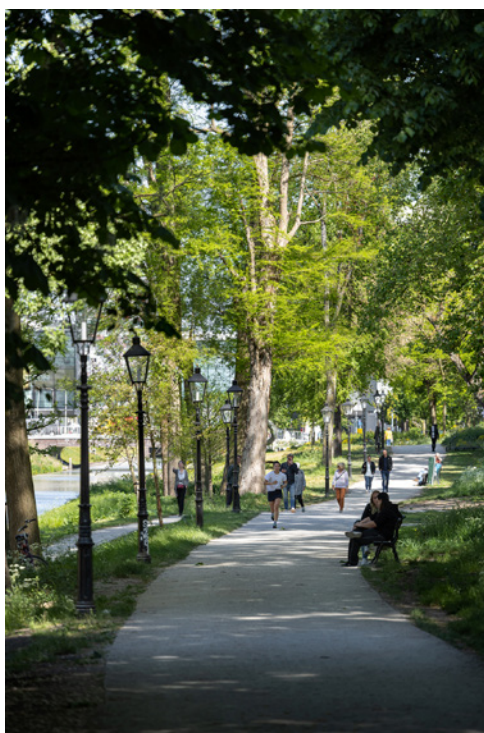
Developer: Gemeente Utrecht

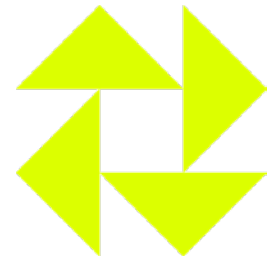
The restoration of the final section of the Catharijnesingel includes an area roughly 1.1 kilometres long. A total of about 40,000 cubic metres of water has returned to the canal, and its length now reaches almost six kilometres. Working on the course of the Catharijnesingel and the expansion of the Zocherpark, OKRA reorganised the traffic that occupied the site, diverting cars and giving priority to pedestrians. The extended walking path along the canal invites recreational and sports use; visitors can stroll through meadows among works of art, as well as numerous leisure areas and a variety of planted areas, each with its own species.

Recovering access to the water is the key aspect of this project and the reason why visitors will want to return to the Catharijnesingel. Whether engaging in water-based activities or walking along the water's edge where the park is reflected on the surface, the inhabitants of Utrecht can experience the city's historical relationship with the water and the canal in a new space.

A varied grove of trees – poplars, planes, cherry plums and elms – connects this new park with the existing Zocherpark. OKRA paid close attention to biodiversity in their choice of trees, including, for example, flowering trees that attract bees. This variety, while enhancing biodiversity, also ensures different experiences for visitors throughout the seasons.

The use of materials – clinker bricks and gravel – creates a visual connection with Utrecht's historic centre. Near the existing dock, a wooden platform can be used as a seating element, a stand or a stage. A lower section added to the existing wooden platform is used by canoers, paddle boarders and other pleasure boat users.





Finalist works

The jury of the 2022 European Prize for Urban Public Space also highlights the work of the following four finalists:



FLOW, 2021. *Brussels, Belgium.*

POOL IS COOL, Decoratelier Jozef Wouters

Flow, designed and built with the participation of fifty young people, is the first open-air swimming pool to be constructed in Brussels in forty years. This project introduces a temporary structure that establishes a rich meeting place for enjoying fresh air and water. As a simple, economical, modular system that can easily be built by many hands, it presents a good example of how everyone can participate in creating an active, healthy public space.



Hage, 2021. *Lund, Sweden.*

Brendeland & Kristoffersen architects, Price & Myers

alternative to the logic of rapid urbanisation in its surroundings. A courtyard, closed on three sides by walls made of bricks recovered from a demolished factory building, is set in still-undeveloped land on the outskirts of Lund. The owner of the land has decided not to keep pace with the urbanising development of the area, but to let it follow its own course open to the citizens. The courtyard is a first intervention, an anticipation of a gradual evolution of the place: an *hortus inconclusus*.



Saint Sernin Square, 2020. *Toulouse, France.*

Joan Busquets, Pieter-Jan Versluys, BAU

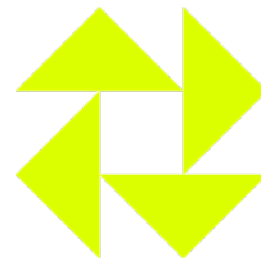
The project for Saint Sernin Square in Toulouse restores eminence to the historic urban fabric of the city. The cars that occupied its surface have been removed, and lost trees are reinstated as organisers of the public space. The simplicity of the proposal, its use of materials, and recognition of the heritage of the site have become the project's mechanisms for reactivating a new, once-jeopardised public space and regaining its vertical dimension and establishing an area that can accommodate a range of public uses.



“Sporta pils dārzi” urban garden in Riga, 2021. *Riga, Latvia.*

Artilērijas dārzi

The urban community garden “Sporta pils dārzi” is the result of a popular initiative to recover an abandoned lot and becomes a new typology of public space. The project consists of a system of seedling distributions and interstitial spaces that will be occupied during events and encounters. The resulting project is a new system, a model of urban space that incorporates productive, cultural and social logics and integrates emerging natural elements as part of the community space.



Jury

The international jury was presided by **Teresa Galí-Izard**, landscape designer, engineer and professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich. The other members were **Hans Ibelings**, architectural critic and historian, and director of The Architecture Observer; **Eleni Myrivili**, doctor of anthropology and global chief heat officer for UN-Habitat; **Andreas Ruby**, director of the Swiss Architecture Museum in Basel; **Paloma Strelitz**, architect, creative director of Patch and founder of Assemble, London, and **Špela Videčnik**, architect, founding member of OFIS Architects, Ljubljana. The jury was supported by **Lluís Ortega**, architect, professor at UPC and the Prize's secretary.

Advisory Committee

The European Prize for Urban Public Space is an initiative of the **Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB)**, with the collaboration of the following European institutions:

Arc en Rêve, Bordeaux, France
Architekturzentrum Wien – AzW, Vienna, Austria
ArkDes, Stockholm, Sweden
La Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris, France
CIVA, Brussels, Belgium
Deutsches Architekturmuseum – DAM, Frankfurt, Germany
Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum, Tallin, Estonia
Kortárs Építészeti Központ – Kék, Budapest, Hungary
Muzej za Arhitekturo in Oblikovanje – MAO, Ljubljana, Slovenia
The Architecture Foundation – AF, London, United Kingdom

The history of a Prize

The European Prize for Urban Public Space began in the year 2000, and is the only prize in Europe dedicated to public space, a fundamental category in European cities. Therefore, the Prize differs from other initiatives that focus on the figure of the architect, or that grant awards for landscaping: instead, the CCCB's prize showcases the relational and civic nature of mostly urban spaces.

The Prize's natural home is the European city, which, despite its many diverse iterations, shares certain historical elements: there is often a human scale, a compact design, and spaces are used in a mixture of ways. In this particular idea of the European city, public space plays a key role in terms of bringing people together. It is loaded with political, economic and social values, which cannot be separated from the physical design that accommodates them and makes them possible.

Throughout its 23 years of history, and 11 editions, the Prize has received 2,532 submissions. To date, it has awarded 19 prizes, and 35 special mentions. The Prize has thus become an exceptional observatory of European cities.

The **Archive of the European Prize for Urban Public Space**, an online resource, brings together the best works presented for the award since its inception. With more than three hundred experiences from nearly 200 cities, it is a witness to, and permanent observatory of the construction and evolution of public spaces throughout Europe.

The Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB)

The **CCCB** is a multidisciplinary cultural centre that is devoted to exploring the major issues of contemporary society through different languages and formats, with a wide-ranging programme that includes large thematic exhibitions, lecture cycles, literary encounters, audiovisual screenings, and festivals. Since its very beginnings, the CCCB has fostered reflection on contemporary cities, understanding them as a privileged space of the transformations and challenges of the world today.

This project is made possible thanks to the contributions of the following institutions:



Diputació
Barcelona

arc en rêve centre d'architecture



The press release and high-resolution images from the Prize may be found at:

>>>> Link to the press release>>>>
www.publicspace.org

For further information, reportages and interviews please contact with:



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