

**INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION**  
**BALTIC SEA ART PARK**  
**JURY REPORT**

**Preface**

The objective of the competition was to find the best visions for a common exhibition space of the Baltic Sea countries in Estonia.

The Baltic Sea Art Park will be located in the downtown of Pärnu, on the left shore of the Pärnu River, in the immediate proximity of the historical Suursild, the only car bridge in the city centre. According to initial plans, folk art and art work of professionals of the Baltic Sea nations will be exhibited in the floating pavilions. To establish these national pavilions, nine countries of our common sea will be invited: Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland with autonomous Åland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

The target of the international contest was to find visions for a spatial solution on the riverside with green park and historical granite pier as well as the architectural sketch solution for the main building of the exposition hall with a draft for national floating pavilions on water.

**Competition process**

In July 2013, the Museum of New Art in Pärnu, in cooperation with the Union of Estonian Architects and the Pärnu Town Government launched the international architectural competition.

By the deadline in October 10th, 78 architectural companies and architects submitted their design solutions of which 73 were approved by the qualification committee. The committee disqualified:

1. entry with the arriving nr. 2 which had no keyword, no qualification documents and without separate envelopes;
2. entry with the keyword AUBE which had no boards, no documents and the CD didn't work;
3. entry with the keyword SHORELINE because its mailing date was 15-10-2013 as a five days later than required by the rules of contest;
4. entry with the keyword WHERE THE CITY MEETS THE WATER as the group of authors didn't include any architect with rights for engineering in the European Union.
5. entry with the arriving nr. 72 which had no keyword, no diplomas or any of needed certificates.

All qualified competition works were judged by the international jury during the three-days-long meeting in October 25-27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in Pärnu. The jury selected the top 11 design solutions and continued virtual discussions via e-mail and came to the final decision on web-based voting system. By November 14<sup>th</sup>, the jury underlined selection of all estimated prize winners. The jury decided to point out one submission with the special mention of jury and to add it into the list of awarded visions.

## **Members of international jury and awards**

**Edward Lucie-Smith**, art historian, UK (Patron for the Foundation of the New Art Museum)

**Toomas Kivimägi**, Mayor of Pärnu

**Kim Utzon**, architect, Denmark

**Pekka Vapaavuori**, architect, Finland

**Ilmar Reepalu**, architect-urbanist, the long-term Mayor for Malmö, Sweden

**Indrek Näkk**, architect, Union of Estonian Architects

**Jaak Huimerind**, architect, Union of Estonian Architects

**Mark Soosaar**, art director of the Museum of New Art, Pärnu

**Karri Tiigisoone**, Pärnu Town architect

and **Pille Epner** as the secretary representing Union of Estonian Architects

The jury considered the following aspects of the design solutions important with respect to the traditions of urban planning and architecture in Estonia:

- Visibility - making a statement in the cityscape
- Practicability - usable exhibition halls, different administration functions
- Urban situation - traffic flow, connections with the river, bridge and neighboring areas
- Pavilions - possibility for the Baltic Sea countries to run architectural competitions for design of their national pavilions.

The jury decided to award the prizes to the following entries:

**First Prize (5000 EUR)** to the entry **KGAMMP**

**Second Prize (3000 EUR)** to the entry **A WELCOMING FORTIFICATION**

**Third Prize (2000 EUR)** to the entry **TUUTUTAMA**

**Promotional Prize (1000 EUR)** to the entry **VEEMAILM**

**Promotional Prize (1000 EUR)** to the entry **LANDMARK**

**Special Mention of Jury (award from the Port of Pärnu)** to the entry **VAIAVÄLI**

## **Jury's comments on the urban situation of the competition site**

In recent years, the downtown of Pärnu has taken a big step closer to the river although it hasn't really reached to the river. The riverside has been historically rather used by the ports, mills, industries, warehouses and other servicing functions.

During WWII, a large part of Pärnu's downtown was destroyed and the historical cityscape has been replaced by a Soviet-era skyline that doesn't fit well with remaining historical milieu. The new supermarkets that are a third component are create a level skyline when the downtown area is seen from the opposite riverbank. There is a real need to enrich the waterfront of the downtown with high quality buildings and outstanding architecture.

The proposed idea of the Baltic Sea Art Park (or even as an Art Port!) brings public function and developed space quite forcefully to the waterfront. However, the plot is still quite isolated from the rest of urban space. So, the main objective for future is to link the particular site with the rest of the urban space. To create an enjoyable cityscape, it is important to use more dignifying materials than asphalt and concrete. Equally important, it would necessary to create a comprehensive vision of the riverbank which takes into account scale and structure of modern Pärnu. The aim should be to link the art park (or art flotilla!) with other cradles of culture nearby: the drama theatre Endla, the central library, the museum of history of Pärnu County, the concert hall and the brand new cinema.

Very serious changes are needed to create a new system of logistics, parkings and walkways to connect the art park with other cultural sites. Jury member Edward Lucie-Smith raised idea of public water transport to bring visitors together to the art park from the both shores of Pärnu River.

## **Jury's comments on the top 11 entries**

### **The First Prize : KGAMMP**

This entry has an outstanding design and strong urbanistic conception. It is one of the few works that really deals with functionality in a complete, in a very practical fashion. It has also looked riverbank in slightly broader scale by providing a solution to the remaining parts of the shore based warehouse or a medieval building form.

The main building is designed as an art temple, located on the same line as the medieval St. Nicholas Church, destroyed by Soviet air raids during WW II. The building affects the skyline and adds a third dimension to an otherwise quite monotonous view. Its semi-transparent shell acts as a beacon in the dark times. The main exhibition building is raised on piles thus securing good visibility around the park area. Lifting up the whole building stresses the role of the main hall as a prominent new structure in the cityscape.

A main attraction of this entry is a floating square moored to the riverbank. The national pavilions are placed alongside the square, like buildings around a town square. This arrangement secures good circulation to and between the pavilions. This also secures a consistent appearance thus keeping open the final design for the national pavilions. As shown in the plans, this arrangement allows the pavilions to be built in different sizes and shapes according the needs of the individual country without compromising the

outcome.

This vision brings to Pärnu a new landmark and will be a great market place for artists from the Baltic Sea countries. It would be the best art-link between past and future in the historical Hanseatic town Pärnu.

### **The Second Prize: A WELCOMING FORTIFICATION**

Strong and outstanding work, one of the best thought-out entries in the competition. The play on Pärnu town's original fortification from medieval times is a great idea to link history and future.

This entry incorporates a clear landscape architectural element covering the exhibition hall partly from the direction of the city but opens up the project to the river. A clear axis and an entrance is formed in the middle of the site to enable a logical connection with the galleries and the existing music hall. Connection to the national pavilions is formed via a lowered boardwalk which makes the connection to the river better. As part of the landscape the roofs of the exhibition hall are used for outside activities.

It deals well with all the functions serving the floating art exhibition - an art gallery, administration, commercial facilities. Very few of the other entries deal satisfactorily with the way in which an art gallery needs to function. All the activities being on the ground level makes the servicing easy, but according to the floor plans not much thought is given to the service traffic of the exhibitions or the cafeteria.

The project is well balanced considering Pärnu's size and capabilities (not too pompous, intimate and cozy). In its modesty, however, acts as a landmark (maybe should be even a bit higher). Pavilions with separate wooden platform in the river are forming their own "street of galleries".

### **The Third Prize: TUUTUTAMA**

A most attractive work with an unforgettable design. An outrageous entry, which makes a clear statement that cannot be ignored. The giant worm devouring everybody entering Pärnu city might not be every art lovers dream but situated on the old outdated bridge it combines old and new giving the old structure a new meaning. One of the few entries which enable circulation from one floating pavilion to another without stepping out, hence, creating a continuous flow through the pavilions.

One of the best urbanistic solutions in the competition, showing the possibilities of the 21st century architecture. The solution leaves the park area open to the future possibilities, in the same time creating a connection between both former port areas. This work attempts to solve and complement the existing Stalinist cityscape by softening its rigidity and scale.

The absence of actual floor plans of the main building makes it impossible to judge the functionality of the entry. Giving the fact that the bridge with its heavy traffic cuts through the main body of the building and that the visualizations of the façades give the impression of a glass cone, it would be quite impossible to exhibit art in this building. Expensive and impractical but impressive and challenging.

### **The Promotional Prize: VEEMAILM**

A very handsome proposal which clearly marks the site and has a very strong architectural presence. The floating art port is quite amazing in its harmony of water and reflecting lights. Art boats and main exhibition hall on land are composed as a complete

and nice art world. A real Nordic architectural ensemble.

The massive glass surfaces would probably be problematic for displaying artwork. The text states that the glass surfaces can be covered with sliding doors and hatches but the floor plans do not enforce the idea. In the 3D presentations the combination of the main exhibition building and the floating pavilions look very pleasing but the idea does not give much freedom for planning the national pavilions.

#### **The Promotional Prize: LANDMARK**

Architectural solution is attractive and well thought-out. It presents a simple but functional space for art.

The supporting functions on the ground level are clearly executed and the cafeteria on the top floor enables an unrestricted view of the whole art park and the floating pavilions. The pavilions are rather monotonously placed on a row alongside the riverbank but the nearly militant look of these freight container-like landing vessels fulfill their purpose. On the other hand the unassuming look of the proposed pavilions make room for the individual design of the national pavilions

There are some seemingly odd solutions in the floor plan, like the lavatories on a separate floor with no handicap access or the rotating bridge in the exhibition space with no obvious purpose.

#### **The Special Mention by Jury (supported by the Port of Pärnu): VAIAVÄLI**

An outstanding vision of an art project focused mainly on attractive lighting system. A big amount of lanterns are placed like on masts of swinging yahtboats. The project would create amazing moving reflections on running riverwater. This is an inspiring design project which gives great ideas for future lighting solutions in the downtown harbor of Pärnu where the main river of Estonia meets the Baltic Sea.

### **Other top entries in an alphabetical order**

#### **BALTIC CIRCLE**

Reforming totally the location, the project brings a brand new structure to the quite traditional masterplan of Pärnu. An outstanding design which creates a very specific space, in the same time not blocking the different directions.

The main building doesn't work in a best way for exposing art work. The interior could be worked out more functional.

#### **DUNE**

One of the few entries which could be located close to the existing bridge. This enables easy access and logical ticketing services for visitors entering the site from the bridge. A nice and unique shape of the square.

As water level in the river is depending on changing winds over the Baltic Sea, the site of floating pavilions might become a great problem.

## **EMBRACE**

The radical idea to close Lai Street and replace it with park connecting the exhibition area with the neighboring concert hall. The authors have noticed the park is quite separated from surrounding urban space and must be better linked to it. The main building is positioned nearby the bridge which gives good connections to the theater square and port area, in the same time giving the necessary landmark to the waterfront. Sensitively modern main building is skillfully connected with the river and the park area.

The concept is comprehensive and serious but difficult to realize in water as well as towards the ground. The vision could be better in use of roof landscape.

## **EME**

A very strongly simplified vision with a conceptual background. The paths crossing the parklands connect the national pavilions to their respective countries via invisible threads. Entrance to the site and to the exhibition hall is designed to connect exhibitions with the music hall and the rest of the cityscape. The entrance is clearly marked with a pool. Professional, simple and elegant modern architecture. The site plan is urbanistically correct and precise. Easy to build for reasonable price. Long building together with the park area forms a nice festival area. Exhibition space is simple and universal.

Along Lai Street, there is a too long line of closed wall. A more-or-less all glass building makes it very difficult to use as an art exhibition space.

## **KOLM TŪKKI**

This is one of the few entries where the main exhibition space is placed right on the shoreline and protruding over the riverbank, even hanging over the riverbed. The execution of the floor plan is straightforward and simple with the entrance and cafeteria on the ground level and the exhibition space on the second floor. The park area is left intact and open for possible outdoor exhibitions. The floating pavilions are moored to the riverbank but an additional floating boardwalk is created around the pavilions forming a safe harbor which enables entering the Art Park with a boat. From this pier it would be easy to realize pedestrian bridge or a ferry connection to the other side of the river. The idea of the national pavilions being pneumatic structures is a bit far fetched but on the other hand the vision clearly shows that there are no restrictions for designing the individual national pavilions.

Designed as the huge greenhouses, the ground buildings on riverside can't be used as multifunctional exhibition halls, unfortunately.

**The opening of envelopes with keywords and awarding ceremony will take place in the Museum of Architecture in Tallinn, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, at 4 PM.**

**The first prize is supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and will be delivered to the winner by the Minister of Culture of Estonia Mrs Urve Tiidus. Other prizes are supported by the Town of Pärnu and will be made to the winners by Mayor of Pärnu Mr Toomas Kivimägi. The Special Mention of Jury is supported by the Port of Pärnu and will be delivered by one of the owners Mr. Juhan Pihelbu. All submitted entries will be exhibited in Tallinn, in the Museum of Architecture until the end of January, 2014<sup>th</sup>.**