Concrete Design Competition 11 – 'PRESENCE'

JURY REPORT

On 4 July 2024, the Belgian jury gathered to review the submissions of the 11th Concrete Design Competition. This year, we received not less than 27 entries that responded to this edition's theme of 'PRESENCE' with posters representing projects ranging from product design to architecture.

Based on these posters, the anonymised projects were assessed by the jury, which was chaired by Bram Aerts, and included Caroline Versteden, Carmen Van Maercke, Dieter De Vos, and Paul Mouchet. *(cf. infra for more information on the jury members)*

The jury awarded the first prize to "REbuild" a project where concrete elements are preserved or reused in the adapted building, thereby awarding a project that is exemplary in its use of concrete and excels in its architectural *presence*.

The second and third prizes were awarded to projects that utilized concrete for projects that have a very long lifespan, unabashedly playing off concrete in the materialisation of the project.

The two projects that received an honourable mention, both focus on circularity. One project uses old precast concrete panels from the primal Flemish fences, another considers new, demountable structures in concrete.

In addition to receiving cash prizes, the winners were invited to participate in the international masterclass during the last week of August in Eindhoven. These five places were divided among the three prizes, the additional spot was filled in by a student among the honourable mentions.

'REbuild' – Stijn Jalon & Douwe Neven
KULeuven, Faculteit Architectuur, Campus Sint-Lucas Gent
1st Prize (€ 2 000 + master class)

This project begins with an examination of the prefabricated concrete beams, columns, and TT-beams that make up the industrial building that currently dominates Mexico Island in Antwerp. The plan calls for keeping the building lot's current structure intact while salvaging materials from other locations for the modified construction. A new structure was created by fusing salvaged materials with the pre-existing columns

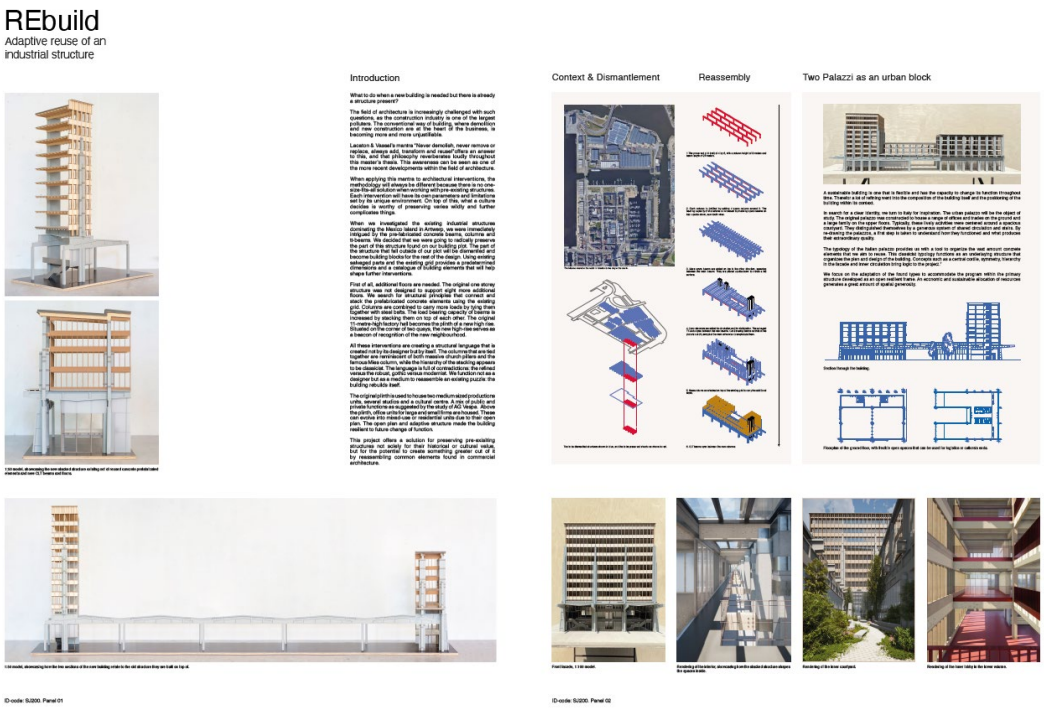
arranged in a grid since the original one-story building was not intended to hold eight further stories. The columns are joined by attaching steel belts around them. The building is finished by combining timber components with this concrete framework. In a sense, the architecture students see themselves as a tool to piece together an already-existing puzzle in this process rather than as designers: the building rebuilds itself.

The jury highly appreciates the architectural quality of this proposal, a rarity in projects that focus on reuse. The design draws inspiration from the Italian palazzo typology, resulting in a mature architectural language. The approach is distinctly architectonic, with construction elements seamlessly integrated to define the building’s appearance and presence.

What sets this project apart is its relevance. Despite working with a generic structure, the students explore innovative themes, opening up possibilities for future structures. It’s a pioneering endeavour that considers the temporality of materials – concrete, wood, and cladding.

The presentation is clear and convincing, emphasizing the adaptive reuse of an industrial building. The coherence of integrating various materials underscores the project’s architectural maturity. Overall, it’s a forward-thinking exploration that balances tradition and innovation.

>> poster: www.febelcem.be/fileadmin/user_upload/agenda/divers/CDC11_1st_REbuild.pdf



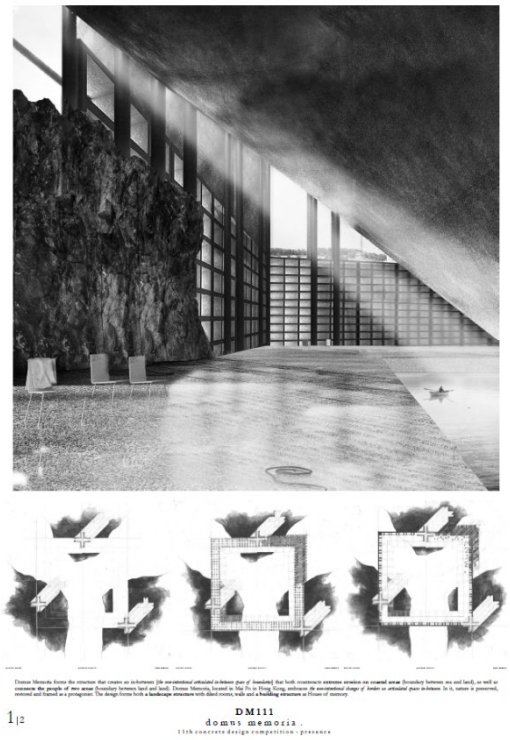
‘Domus Memoria’ – Anna-Lisa Custers
UHasselt – Faculteit Architectuur en Kunst
2nd Prize (€ 1 000 + master class)

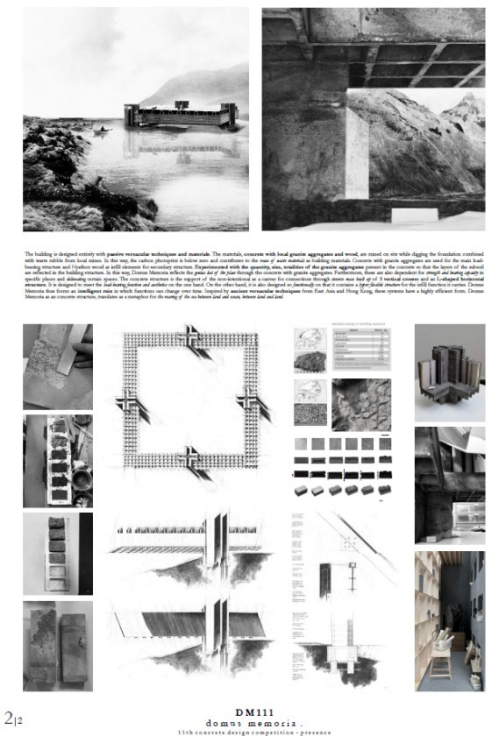
Domus Memoria is a project located in Mai Po, Hong Kong, bridging a vast water area. It forms a structure that creates an in-between that both interacts with extreme erosion in coastal areas as well as connects the people of two areas. The design forms both a landscape structure with diked rooms, and walls and a building structure as House of Memory. The materials, concrete with local granite aggregates and wood, are mined on site while digging the foundation, combined with waste rubble from local mines.

The jury appreciates how concrete is used because of its endurance and its relevance for making structures and buildings that last for a long time. The designer intentionally plays with the aspect of erosion and embraces the beauty of decay. Concrete is used as a noble material, akin to natural stone. The building is contextual in that local aggregates are used, although the same effort could have been made to the architectural context, a connection that is less clear in the design. The experimentation on the composition of the concrete is intriguing. The grand scale makes the projects exceptional but also shows its limitations. The overall presentation is clear although the project could have been more coherent.

The materiality of concrete is put to the forefront in the presence of the building and adds to the overall atmosphere of the project.

>> poster: www.febelcem.be/fileadmin/user_upload/agenda/divers/CDC11_2nd_Domus_Memoria.pdf





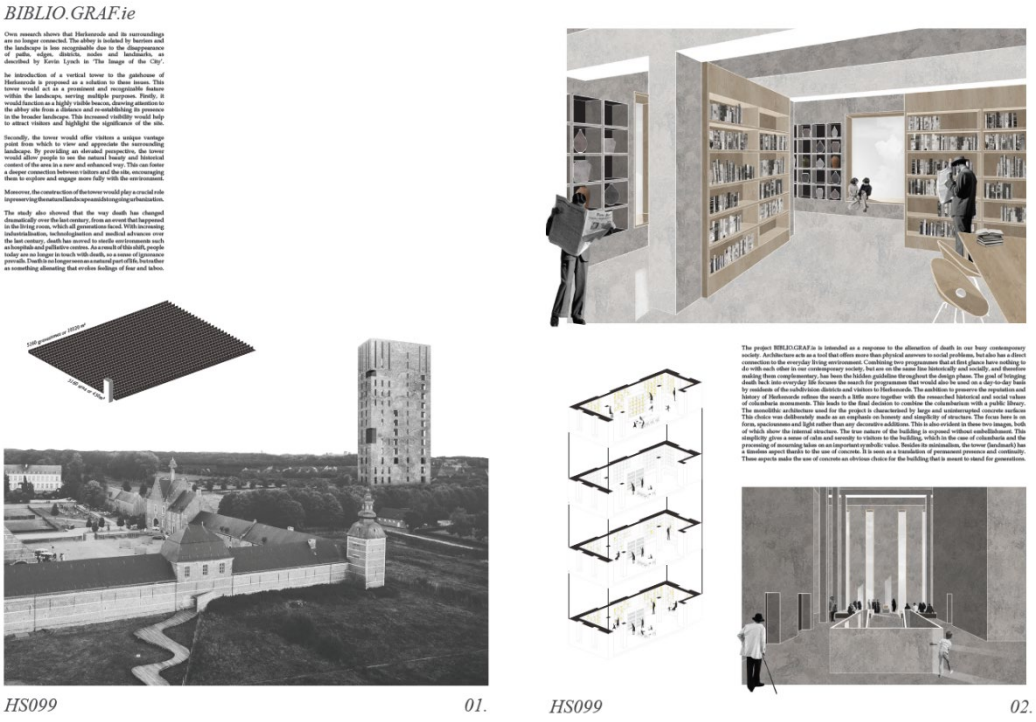
‘BIBLIO.GRAF.ie’ – Hélène Simonis
UHasselt – Faculteit Architectuur en Kunst
3rd Prize (€ 500 + master class)

This project for Herkenrode wishes to create a vertical tower as a new landmark. From there the visitor would have a different view on the surroundings. Moreover, the tower would serve as a vertical columbarium, which preserves the natural landscape around compared to a cemetery with tombstones. By combining the columbarium with a library, death will be brought back into everyday live.

The jury appreciates this provocative project. It raises relevant questions, a very pertinent thing to do. But is the answer the right one?

The project is notable because it suggests the use of concrete as a long-term building material. It accomplishes this with a structure that, while seemingly absurd in scale, eventually gains significance. In addition to the material's lifespan, the material's weight plays a significant role in whether or not concrete is a desirable option. The evocation aspect of the idea is its true strength, despite the presentation having room for improvement.

>> poster: www.febelcem.be/fileadmin/user_upload/agenda/divers/CDC11_3rd_BIBLIO.GRAF.ie.pdf

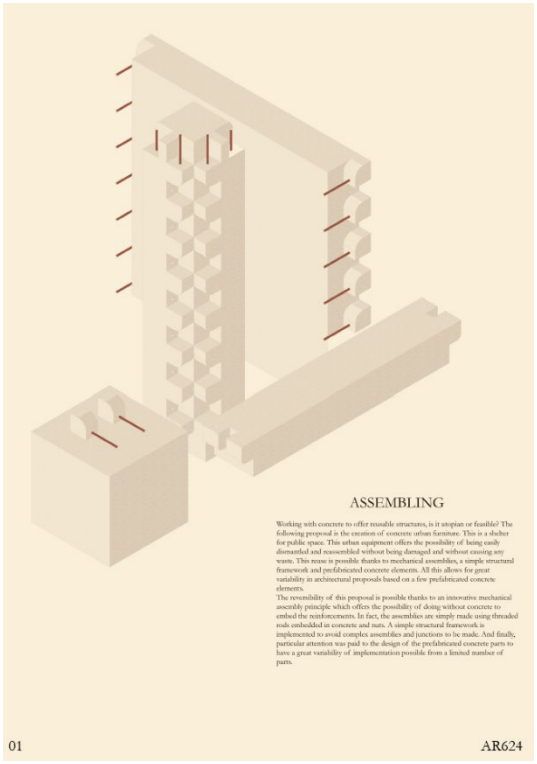


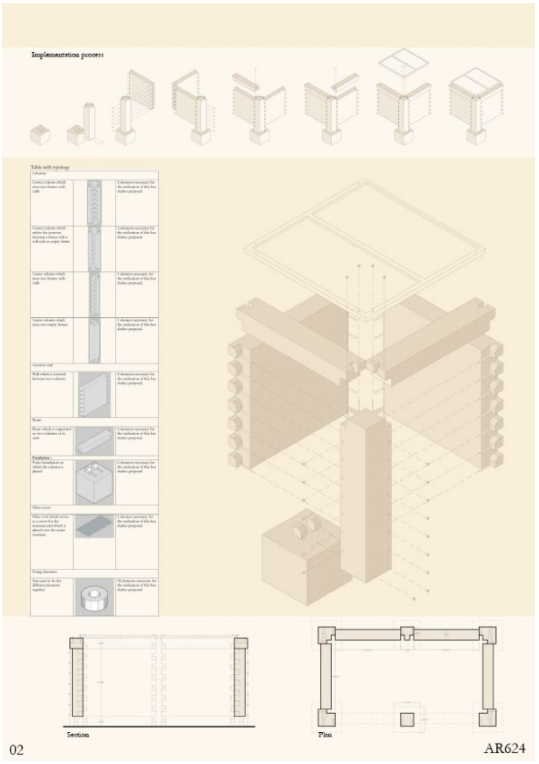
‘Assembling’ – Ali Chahrour & Rémi De Rijck
UCLouvain – LOCI
Honourable Mention (€ 250)

This project showcases research into the process of assembling an urban shelter. The way it is designed, it can easily be dismantled and reassembled. The joints are dry connections, so no concrete is poured to connect the elements and embed the reinforcement. Particular attention was paid to the design of the prefabricated concrete part to have the greatest variability of implementation possible from a limited number of parts.

The relevance of the project for the jury is that it clearly shows that there is a lot to research on joints for circular construction. It is a lovely way to explore the possibilities of concrete beyond the usual solutions provided for assembling precast elements.

>> poster: www.febelcem.be/fileadmin/user_upload/agenda/divers/CDC11_HM_Assembling.pdf





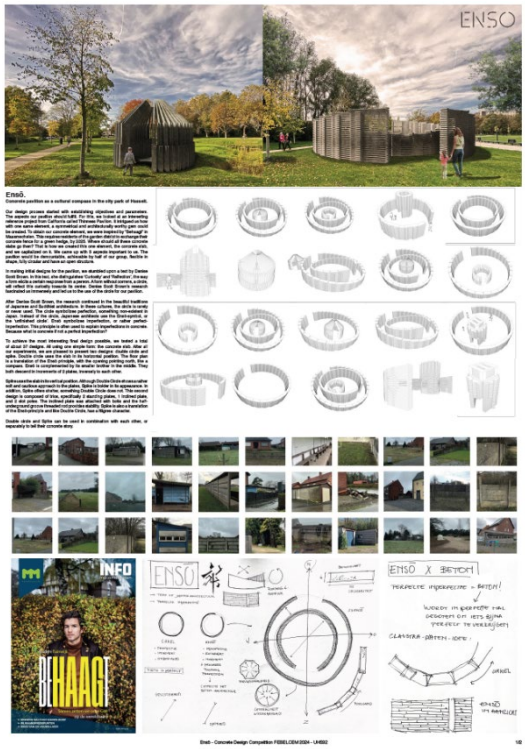
‘ENSO’ – Illy Klerckx, Valerie Langens & Estée Scavone
UHasselt – Faculteit Architectuur en Kunst
Honourable Mention (€ 250 + 1 place for the master class)

This project proposes a pavilion for the city park in Hasselt. The designers looked at the concrete fences in the area that would have to be replaced by green hedges in the near future. The concrete slab became the building block of this pavilion. A total of about 37 designs were tested, all using this one simple form. Mock-ups were made paying extra attention to how these elements could be joined.

The jury was surprised to see the inventiveness of how this typical Belgian second-rate product is reused – Roger Raveel comes to mind. It shows the possibilities of this omnipresent material, although the final design isn’t fully convincing. Maybe it shouldn’t look like a monument, but more like a bus shelter.

Special appreciation for the mock-up and the attempt to build it. As an example of urban mining this project is very relevant.

>> poster: www.febelcem.be/fileadmin/user_upload/agenda/divers/CDC11_HM_Enso.pdf



BELGIAN NATIONAL JURY

Bram Aerts – ATAMA (jury chair)

Bram Aerts, together with Carolien Pasmans, founded ATAMA in 2011, which was known as TRANS until 2023. After graduating from KU Leuven, Bram gained professional experience in Brussels and Antwerp.

With over 15 years of expertise in architecture and urban planning, Bram focuses on the creative direction of the office, client relations, communication, and research. He is closely involved in all ATAMA projects, from conception to realization.

ATAMA has received (international) recognition for various projects, such as multiple selections for the EU Mies van Der Rohe Awards (2019, 2022, 2024) as well as being the laureate of the Big Mat Award 2019 and Belgian Building Awards 2020.

Bram Aerts is a dedicated lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture KU Leuven Sint-Lucas in Gent and previously at the University of Antwerp and the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture. He often serves as an external jury member for design evaluations and architecture competitions. He gives lectures in Flanders, Brussels, and internationally and has contributed to publications such as City Made (NAi 010 - 2018) and As a Theatre (MER Paper Kunsthalle - 2020).

Carmen Van Maercke – Fallow

Carmen Van Maercke (°1990, BE) is an architect and urbanist (University of Ghent, KULeuven and IUA Venice). From 2015-2020 she worked at Studio Paola Viganò and Architecture Workroom Brussels. Since 2020 she is partner at Fallow, where she was project lead of among others the desealing of the Flagey square in Brussels, Woluwe Waterland, EO Wijers, the Masterplan of the Loop in Ghent, etc. Beside fallow she also teaches at the Rotterdamse Academie van Bouwkunst (RAvB) and the University of Ghent (KUL).

Caroline Versteden – Office WINHOV

Caroline Versteden is specialized in the renovation and repurposing of existing (heritage) buildings in complex urban settings in both the Netherlands and Belgium. Her work primarily focuses on 'young' and often utilitarian monuments, such as stations and office buildings. Sustainability is at the core of her projects, alongside the strategic use of materials, enhancing the social component, and the relationship between program, typology, and location.

Caroline Versteden is a senior project leader and architect at Office Winhov (NL). She completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees (International Master of Architecture and Sustainability) at KU Leuven, Department of Architecture, Ghent campus (BE). After graduating, she briefly interned at 51N4E before completing her internship and working as a project architect at ATAMA in Ghent. In 2020, Caroline joined Office Winhov as a senior project leader, where she continues to work today.

Dieter De Vos – Dieter De Vos Architecten

Dieter De Vos graduated from the University of Ghent as engineer-architect.

After working for several years with internationally renowned architects in London and Paris, Dieter De Vos has been combining since 2009 work on small scale private projects and leading complex urban architectural projects for Neutelings Riedijk Architects such as Herman Teirlinck-Building and Gare Maritime in Brussels.

Dieter De Vos has taught for extensive periods on subjects on the crossroads between architecture and building technology.

Paul Mouchet – CENTRAL

Paul Mouchet (Carhaix, France,1982) graduated with Honors as an architect in 2009 at the ISACF La Cambre (Belgium). Since then he has worked as a project on several awarded and built projects for V+ (Brussels, 2009-2016). Since 2012, he teaches Faculté d’architecture de l’ULB : La Cambre Horta in the 2nd year and in master, studio CUMA. Paul Mouchet is a co-founder of CENTRAL office for architecture and urbanism based in Brussels.

CENTRAL is an architecture and urban research office that was founded in 2015 by four partners. Radim Louda, Paul Mouchet, Valentin Piret and Pierre Burquel set up common practice that explores the faint boundaries between architecture and urban planning and their embeddedness in reality. This young practice has distinguished itself through several award winning projects that demonstrate its interest in a systemic and multiscale approach to architecture, the city and the territory.

Brussels, 4 July 2024

For more information about the Concrete Design Competition, including future editions, please contact **Arnaud Tandt** – FEBELCEM (+32 486 27 43 12 – a.tandt@febelcem.be)