

Schindler Award 2012

Background information

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1. The Schindler Award

The driving idea behind the Schindler Award is to make our cities accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical capabilities. The Award aims to do so by raising awareness of how big an issue accessibility is for many people, and by inspiring architects to take a fresh look at the environments they are creating.

As disabled people know too well, our cities are strewn with barriers – both intentional and accidental. Stairs and obstacles block access to buildings; traffic brings gridlock to roads and impedes the movement of pedestrians; bad planning isolates spaces that could be used for parks or community centers; and unsafe surroundings drive away families and the elderly.

The Schindler Award competition challenges young architects to look at design from a different perspective. Instead of focusing on form, space, light and material, architects must consider how their designs will affect the people who actually have to interact with them throughout their lifetimes. The competition is run biannually for students of architecture in Europe, who are in their last year of a bachelor's degree or studying for a master's.

The Schindler Award grew out of the company's involvement in the European Year of Disabled People in 2003, when Schindler supported projects aimed at raising awareness of the obstacles faced by disabled people. Initially, the Award concentrated on improving disabled access. But rapid urban growth and demographic changes have made accessibility an issue for all urban dwellers, and the Award has broadened its focus accordingly.

Accessibility affects other members of society, too, albeit in more subtle ways. Parents with small children, people with injuries, children who know their way but have to be accompanied because of road traffic and unsafe surroundings.

If the world's cities are to be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, architects and urban planners must develop intelligent and forward-thinking solutions, especially in the domains of construction and mobility.

2. The competition site

The picturesque Swiss capital of Berne was the focus of the Schindler Award 2012. With a population of just 131,000, Berne has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983 and ranks among the world's top ten cities for best quality of life. The old town boasts one of Europe's longest covered shopping promenades with more than six kilometers of arcades and buildings dating back to the early 15th century.

The site chosen for the Schindler Award 2012 stands in stark contrast to the rest of the old town, with its excellently preserved medieval buildings. Lying at the northwest corner, just two-minutes walk from the Central Train Station, the site has its treasures – notably the Museum of Fine Arts and the nearby Aare River – but these must share the space with an unsightly parking area and an imposing railway bridge. On one side of the main thoroughfare is a tangle of streets, one of which is home to the city's drug

dispensary for heroin addicts; on the other is the graffiti-covered "Reitschule" Cultural Center, which stages rock concerts, cinema and agitprop (political) theater.

3. The competition task

The core themes of the task were urban repair, density, public space and integration. The students were asked to make better use of the public space and integrate urban repair ideas into their planning, while also incorporating the various cultural and fringe groups that have settled in the area. The idea was to propose a new master plan in order to raise utilization and density in the perimeter without excluding any of the existing social institutions, and to improve overall quality and accessibility of the public area.

Six specific subtasks were defined to reinvigorate the site:

- Propose a new master plan to raise utilization and density in the perimeter.
- Strengthen the urban link among the area's three cultural institutions.
- Propose an adequate urban answer to define both the northwest corner of the old town as well as the southern bridgehead of the Lorraine Bridge.
- Integrate the existing Drogenanlaufstelle (drug dispensary for heroin addicts).
- Improve the overall quality and accessibility of the public space.
- Link the public space in and around the Schützenmatt area with the footwalks on the borders of the Aare River.

4. Reference persons

To ensure the students focused on "Access for All" and "Inclusive Urbanism", they were required to take account of the needs of two reference persons in their designs. Joe Manser (impaired mobility) and Stefan Zappa (impaired vision) served as members of jury and judged how well the students had understood their viewpoints and needs.

5. Prizes

The jury nominated ten projects, from which the five winners were selected. The following prize money was awarded:

- €5,000 for the winner
- €3,000 for second place
- €2,000 for third place
- €1,000 each for fourth and fifth places

Those schools that conducted their own pre-selection process and fulfilled the other requirements of the competition were automatically entered for the school prizes. The winners received the following prizes:

- €25,000 for the highest ranking project
- €15,000 for the second highest ranking project
- €10,000 for the third highest ranking project

6. The jury

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| President of the Jury | |
| Prof. Kees Christiaanse | Architect, ETH - Institut für Städtebau, Zürich, Switzerland |
| Jury Members | |
| Martin Beutler | Sociologist, Berne, Switzerland |
| Andreas Binkert | Competition Management, Architect, developer Nüesch Development AG, Zürich, Switzerland |
| Mitzi Bollani | Member of the European Disability Forum, Architect, Italy |
| Prof. Yongjie Cai | Deputy Director of Architecture Department, College of Architecture and Urban Planning CAUP, Tongji University, Shanghai, China |
| Prof. Marc Dujardin | Architect, Sint-Lucas University, Ghent, Belgium |
| Prof. Dieter Hassenpflug | Chair of Urban Sociology, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar & Universität Duisburg-Essen, Germany |
| Dr. Christoph Lindenmeyer | CEO Schindler Switzerland |
| Joe Manser | Reference person 'impaired mobility', Director Swiss consulting office for a built environment adapted to the needs of the handicapped, Zürich, Switzerland |
| Tobias Reinhard | Competition Management, architect, developer Nüesch Development AG, Berne, Switzerland |
| Prof. Tom Sieverts | Architect & Urbanist, Germany |
| Tabitha Staehelin | Architect, Switzerland |
| Mark Werren | Head of the Urban planning Department, City of Berne, Switzerland |
| Stefan Zappa | Reference person 'impaired vision', architect, Swiss Association for the Blind, Zurich, Switzerland |