

Press Release

The Basque Country Architecture Institute reopens its doors with two exhibitions about the current social challenges



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> ‘Europan15 Lasarte-Oria’ addresses the challenge of the productive housing, in a context that has led to work remotely for thousands of people around the world.

> The solutions that the Basque and Navarre architecture are already providing to challenges such as the ecologic transition or the ageing of the population can be seen at the ‘COAVN Architecture Awards 2019’ exhibition.

> José José Ángel Medina takes over the direction of the Institute

The Basque Country Architecture Institute (EAI-IAE) has returned to the exhibition program this Tuesday, July 28th, with two new exhibitions that stress the importance of architecture and urbanism to address the major challenges of the current and future society. And it does it with a new team, with the architect José Ángel Medina, who replaces Javier Puldain Huarte in charge of the Institute. The institute, that started a year ago, is promoted by the Department for the Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing of the Basque Government with the collaboration of the Culture Department of the Regional Council of Gipuzkoa, the owner of the building.

Imaginative solutions

At a time when society is reconsidering the housing applications due to the coronavirus pandemic and the implementation of remote work, the first exhibition, projected before the health emergency, opens the debate about the need of establishing “imaginative solutions” in order to facilitate “the creation of an adequate urban





area, that encourages and facilitates the productive activity at the house or at its immediate area". 'Europan15 Lasarte-Oria' is an exhibition that gathers the solutions of the new generations of professional architects, town planners and landscapers in the whole of Europe to the challenge of "productive housing" raised by the Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing of the Basque Government in order to build a hundred of social houses between the city and a rural environment in the south of Lasarte-Oria (Gipuzkoa). It is an industrial municipality where "the housing and the production are adjacent but don't cohabitate", indicates the Basque approach. Europan is a biennial international call to bring visibility to European professionals who are younger than 40 years old. Countries such as France, Austria, Norway, Belgium or Spain participate in it. It also offers an opportunity to public administrations -among them the Housing and Architecture Direction of the Basque Government, part of the promoter members of Europan and also the leader of the EAI-IAE- who receive innovative answers to the locations and challenges that they offer.

The call includes prizes of 12.000 and 6.000 euros in this fifteenth edition, under the themes of productive cities, resources, mobility and social equity. In it, the generations of professionals have been questioned about how it should the ecological transition be in the productive city. From the 47 locations from around Europe that have presented challenges, the Basque has been the one with more solutions proposed, with a total of 43. The eight finalists and the winner idea will be available to the public in the EAI-IAE, which will also include a video about the space in which the winner's approach will become a reality – a local team, led by Alex Etxeberria-

Accesibility, sustainability and gender urbanism

Lasarte-Oria is now at a transition moment for recovering part of the industrial ground next to the historic centre from the urban area in order to allocating it for residential use. It is necessary to "investigate a different productive model, compatible with housing in equal conditions", as indicates the challenge, that requires to the participants to incorporate "accessibility, sustainability, low maintenance requirements, prevent the generation of dark spots, ensure a safe use and implement gender urbanism strategies". The winner project will receive the assignment of the project, since the



Basque Government is one of the few administrations that develop and build ‘European’ projects, with 184 houses in Basauri (1991) and 84 houses in Mina del Morro (Bilbao, 2001).

This exhibition, as well as the second one, will be opened to the citizens from Tuesday to Sunday (Tuesdays and Fridays from 5.30pm to 8.30pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 2pm and from 5.30pm to 8.30pm) until the 27 of September. Both of their coordination has been managed by Javier Puldain Huarte, first director of the EAI-IAE, and Mikel Larratxe, his associate in mmej arkitektura.

The best architectural works in the Basque Country and Navarre

The second exhibition is focused on the architectural production from the last years in the Basque Country and Navarre, with the ‘COAVN Architecture Awards 2019’ exhibition, driven every three years since 1989 by the Official Basque-Navarrese Architects Association (COAVN). The awards highlight specific work and also professional careers, always showcasing the “optimal use of resources and the search for innovative solutions, strengthening the cultural and social nature” of architecture.

Among the exhibition, composed by 24 photos, some works stand out for bringing solutions to the challenges of the ecological transition, integrating renewable energy or applying circular economy criteria in order to be able to relocate the elements in other projects in the future. But there are also other approaches that can help to solve challenges such as the new house applications, that today, in situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have forced to rethink housing from another angle. Same happens with the ageing of the population, with approaches for the creation of flexible and dynamic spaces that respond to the actual and future uses, caring for each life stage in the case of houses.

The majority of works are interventions in the Basque Country and Navarre, but among the works there are now beginning to be rewarded projects of Basque and Navarre professionals in other countries, such as a lecture building in the University of Bambeby, in Senegal, which architecture enables to reduce the temperature in 10 to 15 degrees thanks to the air currents. The reform of a restaurant, the creation of the Athletic de Bilbao Museum, the new life of a industrial plant converted in a sports hall – with mobile cranes that

now hold baskets-, all of them are part of the 'Premios COAVN de Arquitectura 2019' exhibition, which goes through the best Basque-Navarrese architectural approaches. The exhibition ends with and audiovisual about the projects.

Protocol to face the new coronavirus

The exhibitions can be visited in the IAE building, located in the old town of Donostia, in the walk up the castle, between Gaztelubide dining society and the Santa Teresa convent. The EAI-IAE will have adapted capacities, as well as specific signaling and measures in order to maintain the necessary hygiene against Covid-19. The visitors will have to use masks.

A new team for the Institute

The new team starts now its path with the leadership of K6 Gestión Cultural, in order to continuo deepening the relationship between architecture and citizenship, with José Ángel Medina as director of the Institute. Medina has been the director of the Architecture School at the University of Navarre and manages the Master in Architecture of this institution, as well as being author of numerous articles and investigations and his work in Medina&Murua Arkitektura.

Childhood, protagonist in architecture

During this month of July, the first visitors to the EAI-IAE have been children from 6 to 12 years old, who participated in the summer activities conducted by Maushaus in collaboration with the Department for the Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing of the Basque Government. The summer camp has concluded this 17th of July and has been focused on linking architecture to the new generations through experimentation and games.

Further information:

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