

Report for the Open Single-Stage International Architectural Design for the "Knowledge and Innovation Center" (KIC) of Tripoli, Lebanon

June 28, 2019

Tripoli, Lebanon

The jury met on June 27 and 28, 2019 in Tripoli, Lebanon to examine the submissions for the Open Single-Stage International Architectural Design for the "Knowledge and Innovation Center" (KIC) of Tripoli, Lebanon. The competition is managed by the Lebanese Federation of Engineers and Architects on behalf of the Tripoli Economic Zone and The Republic of Lebanon and endorsed by the Union of International Architects (UIA) and supported by the Union of Mediterranean Architects (UMAR). The competition was conducted in accordance to UNESCO regulations and the best practice recommendation of the UIA "competition guide."

The Jury was composed of the following:

Amale Andraos, Dean, Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, USA

Francesco Bandarin, Former Director of World Heritage Centre and Former Assistant Director General for Culture at UNESCO

Fares El Dahdah, Director of the Humanities Research Center at Rice University, USA and member of the Fundação Oscar Niemeyer Board

George Kunihiro FAIA, FJIA Architect/Professor Kokushikan University, Japan. UIA representative

Suha Ozkan, Former Secretary General of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Jad Tabet, Head, Lebanese Federation of Engineers and Architects, Beirut

Antonio Raffaele Rivero, Former Vice President- Region 1 of UIA. UMAR representative

Gustavo Utrabo, UIA designate alternate international juror

Bassam Ziadeh, Head, Order of Engineers and Architect, Tripoli

The Jury elected Amale Andraos as Chair.

The Jury met with Michel Barmaki, Wael Debs and Chawky Fatfat, and from the Technical Commission to discuss the submission process and ensure that only the entries that met the technical requirements were considered. The Jury decided not to consider the following submissions as they did not comply: JA-0214, RE-515 and 108.

As an introduction, the jury discussed the historical importance of the Rachid Karame International Fair (RFIK) grounds, not only for Tripoli and by extension Lebanon, but also for the world's cultural heritage. It was noted that few sites in the world had triggered so much architectural passion and imagination, from the numerous architecture students' theses that have been produced over the last decades, to the encouraging and welcome international renewed attention brought to the urgency of restoring the Fair grounds to serve as an icon for the city and fulfill its role as the heart of its public life.

The Jury noted that the Fair is now inscribed on the UNESCO world heritage tentative list. In particular, the Jury was encouraged by the concurrent efforts that have recently been launched to preserve its structures and landscape and promote its future cultural value and uses.

First, and as a clear sign of the recognition of the importance of the RKIF grounds is the current effort being led under the auspices of UNESCO and with the support of the Getty Foundation to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the property, likely to be completed in the near future.

Second, the Jury recognized the client's commitment to the Fair's future as a world heritage site, as demonstrated by the launching of this important international competition, where over one hundred entries were submitted.

It is the wish of the Jury that this initiative re-asserts the importance of public debate in shaping the future of cities and the role of international open competitions in orienting the future of public projects of great impact to the life of the citizens they are designed to serve.

There were a number of clear criteria established for the competition that were considered carefully during the deliberations: the crucial relationship of any proposal with the Oscar Niemeyer masterplan and the architectural language manifest in its buildings; the definition of a strong identity for the new Knowledge and Information Center (KIC); the requirement to accommodate 60,000sm of new usable surface, to be developed in two phases and with the main focus of this competition being Phase 1 comprising of 30,000sm - 7,000sm to reuse the existing Niemeyer structures and 23,000sm to be added; a flexible strategy that would allow an incremental approach to the development of the site as well as a scaling up; the design of an independent access to the KIC; connectivity to the city; the design of open spaces and access to the public.

The jury also added that the creation of a 'buffer zone' that protects the existing open space in between the Niemeyer structures is important to their integrity; The Jury noted the importance of responding to the architectural rhythm of the existing buildings and the open spaces between them while also recognizing the need to project innovative architectural and urban ideas that engage the contemporary city and open up possibilities for its future. The Jury also noted the importance of maintaining the Fair's original grammar of distinct sectors which gave it clear orientation and hierarchy.

Jury Selection

Following the criteria listed above, the Jury selected the following projects:

As a first prize, the Jury selected IN-971, for its clear strategy and its rigorous approach, proposing an underground intervention that enables incremental yet consistent development across the site. The Jury appreciated the articulation and well-scaled proportion of the proposed courtyards, which would enable a strong integration between phase 1 and phase 2, and support flexibility in the scheme's phased implementation. The deployment of the underground linear structures recalled some of Niemeyer's early designs, resonating with the

rhythm of the grand canopy and keeping in the language of the site. The Jury welcomed the design's resolution of the boundary between the KIC and the remainder of the Fair through a landscape strategy which maintained the integrity of the Fair as open and connected. It is the Jury's wish that the architectural treatment of the built interventions would follow the sophistication of the urban proposition in its further development.

As a second prize, the Jury selected EIQ-116, which also proposes an underground intervention to be deployed incrementally on the site. The Jury appreciated the quality of the project's proposed series of underground spaces, its circulation as well as the diversity of their scale and the design's attention to the site's topography and section, which echoes Niemeyer's manipulation of the ground across the Fair. The overall sense of a varied landscape promised to carry the Fair's conceptualization as a void in the city.

As a third prize, the Jury selected LN-735 for its architectural quality and sensibility and its creative dialogue with Niemeyer's architecture. First, the proposal clearly suggests a careful and successful adaptation of the existing buildings which demonstrates an understanding of their architectural language. Second, the scheme's engagement with new building technologies that support contemporary environmental approaches to architecture resonates with Niemeyer's interest in the technologies of his time and his commitment to integrating architecture and environment in new ways.

In general, and throughout the two day discussions, the Jury noted that all of the competition entries highlighted the potential and challenge of developing the site. The Jury noticed that the 60,000sm requirements of the competition would impose an excessive densification of the proposed area. The Jury unanimously recommends that Phase 2 be re-examined in terms of its built-up area as well as its location in the Fair.

Mentions

Given the importance of the competition and the RKIF, the Jury wanted to give a number of mentions that expanded on the given competition brief, proposing other approaches which the client could positively consider for future development.

ON-104 proposes to house all new interventions within the existing Grand Canopy, re-interpreting its original intent while allowing new life for the building with minimum impact on the site.

JB 173 proposes to locate all new development along the perimeter of the Fair, reinforcing its status as an open space in the city and questions the strategy of a single implementation on the site.

GK 331 proposes an underground solution for Phase 1 that connects the two existing structures on the competition site. The Jury appreciated the quality of light enabled by the design's proposed wells.

Conclusion

In closing, the Jury would like to thank all those who have supported the competition efforts, providing the necessary expertise and all required information for a successful competition.

Jury Signatures

 