



Campus of Religions – interreligious meeting place

29 September to 5 November 2021

Press tour: Tuesday, 28 September 2021, 10.00am, doors open at 9.45am

Speakers: **Michael Ludwig** (Mayor of Vienna)
Harald Gnisen (architect and chair of the Verein Campus der Religionen
[Campus of Religions Association])
Gerhard Weissgrab (President of the Austrian Buddhist Union)
Marianne Durig (architect, Burtscher-Durig ZT GmbH)
Adolph Stiller (curator)

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Available for download at <https://www.airt.at/projects>

Official opening: Tuesday, 28 September 2021, 6.30pm (by invitation only; doors open at 6.15pm)

Venue: Ringturm Exhibition Centre, Schottenring 30, 1010 Vienna

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, free admission (closed on public holidays)

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Meeting place

Located in Vienna's aspern Seestadt, the Campus of Religions is a collaboration between eight religious denominations. This interfaith centre will welcome all religious institutions – and those who take a critical view of religion – as well as the general public. The exhibition at the Ringturm presents the architectural vision behind this peace project – the only one of its kind in the world. It showcases the designs submitted by a total of 42 architecture firms from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Poland and France that took part in the urban planning competition for this groundbreaking religious centre, which was put out to tender in 2020. The three winning projects and the recognition award winners form the focal point of the exhibition, with the overall winner – the design by Viennese architects Burtcher-Durig – taking centre stage.

The Campus of Religions in aspern Seestadt is intended as an interreligious forum that brings to life the principles of coexistence and mutual learning.

From idea to visionary peace project

Ever since the development process for the Seestadt was launched in 2004, planners have focused on ways to provide education, cultural exchange and pastoral care in equal measure in this “city of the future”. The *aspern Seestadt* master plan, which included space for a religious or cultural facility, was unanimously adopted by the local council in May 2007. The corresponding functional zoning plan was passed in 2015.

Over the years, representatives of the participating religious communities and the City of Vienna have looked into the idea of constructing churches and places of worship for several denominations on a single site – a “*campus of religions*”. In the course of the project, this feature has been supplemented by a synergistic education project, the interfaith University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Vienna/Krems (KPH). This unique location will specifically encourage coexistence, interaction and communication between the different denominations, as well as between believers, teachers, students and other visitors to the site.

Right from the outset, Mayor of Vienna Michael Ludwig has backed and promoted the project as a symbol of the equality of the different religions. The Campus of Religions is intended to be an interreligious meeting place that serves to encourage togetherness, as well as underlining the fact that in the Austrian capital religions can actively engage with one another, rather than existing in parallel. In terms of its design, the planned religious centre will be the only peace project of its kind anywhere in the world, and will also radiate a strong international allure.

The City of Vienna has granted the right to construct places of worship at the site to eight religious communities: the Austrian Buddhist Union (ÖBR), the Roman Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Vienna), the Protestant Church (Augsburg Confession), the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ), the New Apostolic Church Austria (NAK), the Sikh Religious Community in Austria, the Greek-Oriental Metropolis of Austria, and the Jewish Community of Vienna. The related legal framework is currently being drawn up and is due to be adopted this year.

Architecture

The flagship Campus of Religions project comprises the KPH, as well as eight sacred buildings, one for each of the participating denominations.

The KPH is Austria's largest private teacher training college, and also provides initial, continuing and further training for primary and secondary school teachers. Run jointly by various Christian churches, KPH's ecumenical sponsorship model is also unique worldwide.

Several buildings for each of the religions will take shape in the Lakeside Crescent Quarter, grouped around an open square. Pastoral care will be provided in jointly administered rooms and halls, which will also host a variety of services such as group meetings, talks, events and celebrations. This will enable guests to experience – and gain insights into – the religious ceremonies and customs of the different communities, which in turn will promote mutual respect, consideration and trust.

A clear architectural thread connecting the religious spaces at the site is integral to the idea behind the project, and use of the rooms by all of the institutions represented at the campus will generate valuable synergies. A second thread, in the shape of outdoor areas such as squares, courtyards and gardens, will also play a key role in the future use of this forum – these spaces will take on a special function, creating links that promote interfaith exchange.

In combination with the newly built KPH, this will create an accessible location for pastoral care, education and wide-ranging cultural interaction, which in turn will make a significant contribution to enhancing everyday life in aspern Seestadt. Against this backdrop, the KPH – which embodies the campus ideal with its extensive range of courses – will have the task of supporting and promoting efforts aimed at encouraging interreligious dialogue.

Architecture competition

On 17 April 2020, an open, EU-wide invitation to tender was published for a single-stage competition for the realisation of the project including an idea part, as well as the subsequent negotiation process for the award of a contract for overall planning services. At a two-day meeting held in July 2020, the judges selected the winners of the three main prizes and the recognition prizes from the 42 submissions.

The high-calibre jury evaluated the projects in accordance with quality criteria for urban planning and architectural design, the design concepts for interior and exterior spaces, as well as in terms of sustainability and resource efficiency related to construction, choice of materials and energy demand, and of the cost-effectiveness of construction and operation.

42 projects were selected, of which 22 were submitted by Viennese architects, six from other Austrian federal provinces, and a total of 14 from Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Poland and France.

Judges

Prof. Boris Podrecca (Chair)
Harald Gnisen (Deputy Chair)
Prof. Otto Häuselmayr (Secretary)
Franz Kobermaier
Carla Lo
Prof. Christa Reicher

Specialist judges

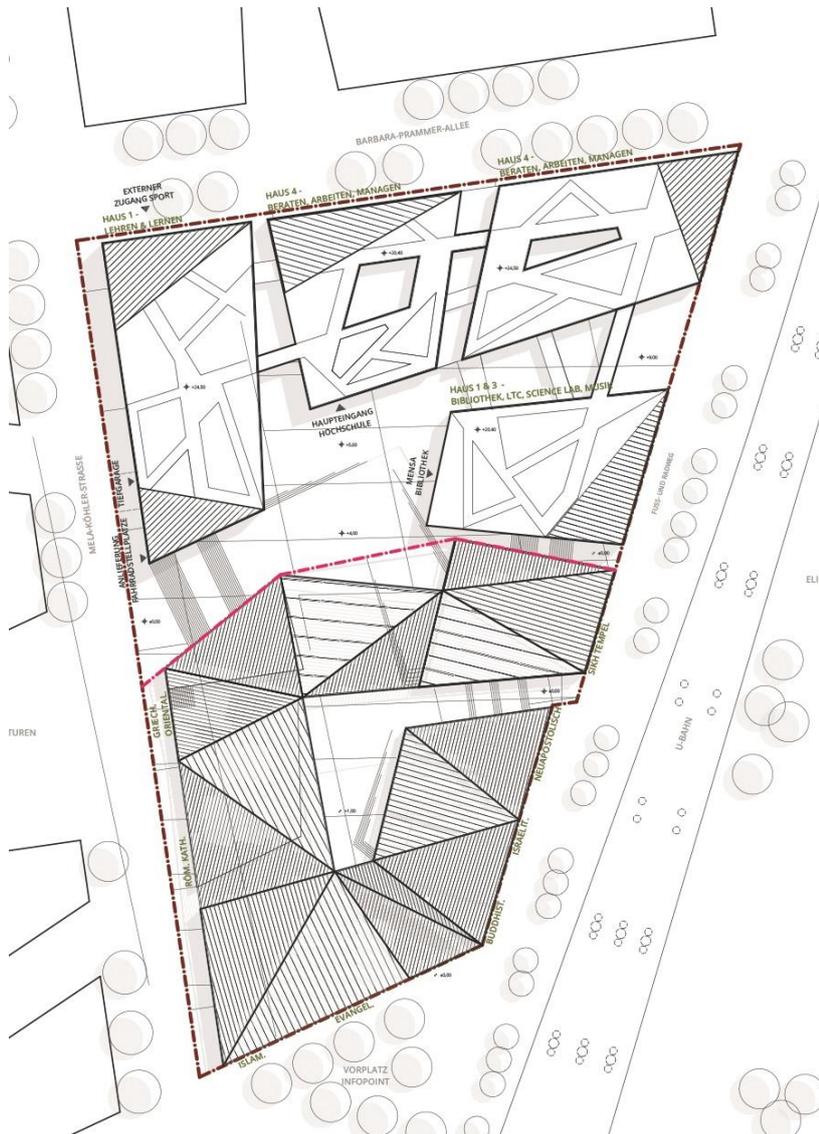
Christoph Berger
Heinrich Kugler
Katja Pistauer-Fischer

Consultants

Georg Stockert (Roman Catholic)
Werner Hemsing (KPH)
Michael Reidegeld (IGGÖ)
Martin Schaurhofer (ÖBR)
Denise Schluderbacher-Girsch (Municipal Department 21B - District Planning and Land Use North-East)
Emre Koca (Municipal Department 20 - Energy Planning)
Christine Spiess (Seestadt Aspern project manager)
G. S. Mangat (Sikh)

The winning project

Vienna-based firm Burtscher – Durig took first prize.



Architects Burtscher and Durig (in collaboration with employees Katharina Penzinger and Stefanija Majstorovic, and consultants Vasko & Partner Ingenieure ZT GmbH) won plaudits from the jury for their joined-up urban design for the various structures, in particular the seamless arrangement of the buildings, stretching from entrance to the site in the south of the development via a gently sloping square to the southern side of the KPH. One of the key qualities of the design is the informal arrangement of the group of sacred buildings and the way in which they coalesce to form a coherent whole. The jury was also particularly impressed with the wayfinding design at the campus.

The heterogeneity of the different religions is encapsulated beneath a delicate, unifying veil – a gentle, airy pergola will provide shade for the square and greened rooftop terraces on hot days. With a sophisticated angular architectural design, the pergola connects the educational facilities at the KPH with the various religious communities' places of worship.

Site layout: © 2020 Burtscher – Durig ZT GmbH

The intervening spaces stand out thanks to a fascinating series of compressions and openings, as well as the effective and clearly thought-through channelling of light into the alleys between the buildings, which responds to the strong lines of the urban design, such as the edges of Platz der Kulturen, which provides access to the lake on construction site H1.

The structural forms of the religious buildings will be kept neutral, allowing for tailored modifications in the course of their ongoing adaptation. At first glance, the compactness and elegance of the KPH building catches the eye, particularly in the layering of the ground floor area, the upper floors and the rooftop gardens. The jury also singled out the rhythmical structure of the open facade design. The sloping square helps to soften the powerful impression created by the buildings. As a result, the KPH building takes its place among the ensemble of places of worship without assuming an overpowerful and dominant position.

All of the functions of the KPH building will be clearly arranged and brought together in a single structure. Architects Burtscher and Durig propose housing the general higher education functions in the ground floor area and on the first floor overlooking the square, with both sections designed for multipurpose use. The facilities for teaching and research on the upper floors will be positioned so as to minimise the distances between the administrative offices in the north-east of the building and the lecture theatres, seminar rooms and labs. Looking onto the square, the canteen on the first floor will also be open to members of the various religious communities. The spacious multifunctional hall on the ground floor on Barbara-Prammer-Allee will play a high-profile role, and two direct entrances to the hall's foyer from

adjacent streets in the quarter are planned. Consequently, the KPH will create significant added value not only for the entire Campus of Religions, but also for neighbouring areas.

The structural design features reinforced concrete with a variety of surface finishes, as well as precast reinforced concrete elements combined with an elegant glass facade. All of the rooftops will be greened, creating a fifth facade. In terms of energy supply, a zero-energy approach is planned, with demand for heating and cooling fully satisfied mainly by means of geothermal probes and component activation, meaning that the campus is not dependent on external energy sources. Additionally, the overall project design, as well as the reference values and proposals for the construction and selected materials indicate that both construction and operation will be highly cost effective.

Other award winners

2nd prize

Tp3 Architekten ZT GmbH - Henter/Rabengruber

Hofberg 10/2

4020 **Linz**

3rd prize

Architekt Martin Kohlbauer ZT GmbH

Nestroyplatz 1/2/27

1020 **Vienna**

Recognition award winners

Heimspiel Architektur ZT GmbH

Bandgasse 32/2a

1070 **Vienna**

ARGE Architekten Kronaus/Mitterer + Klammer*Zeleny ZT GmbH

Landstrasser Hauptstrasse 146/6b

1030 **Vienna**

Architekt Mina Yaney

Karl-Schweighofer-Gasse 12/6

1070 **Vienna**

Catalogue

Architektur im Ringturm LVIX: *Campus of Religions*, Adolph Stiller (ed.), Mury Salzmann Verlag.

Price: EUR 20