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2nd prize
JSWD Architekten, Köln, Deutschland & Chaix & Morel et Associés
Paris, France

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Detailed information

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Consultants	Energie/TGA: WSGreenTechnologies GmbH, Stuttgart; structuEnergie/TGA: WSGreenTechnologies GmbH, Stuttgart; structural engineering/façade: Werner Sobek Stuttgart; fire protection: BFT Cognos GmbH, Aachen; outdoor space: KLA Kiparlandschaftsarchitekten, Duisburg engineering/façade: Werner Sobek Stuttgart; fire protection: BFT Cognos GmbH, Aachen; outdoor space: KLA Kiparlandschaftsarchitekten, Duisburg

Jury comment

The clear distinction of the recessed ground floor from the superimposed cube determines the projects urban-design attitude as an unmistakable building within the context of variously designed, but important buildings. The jury recognizes—and largely applauds—this clear and realistic attitude as befitting the site. The recessed ground floor is marked by a high degree of transparency, which is being achieved by providing all-around glazing and a minimum of interior furnishings. However, it is being questioned whether all the functional requirements put on a ground floor can be met in this way. The arrangement of the interior uses is consistently oriented toward all four sides and is supported by access areas both toward the square and the canal, both of which are recessed corner-to-corner. Most of the jurors criticize the low floor-to-floor height of the entrance situation. The basic idea of volume and recessed ground floor is also reflected in the load-bearing structure, which through suspension of the upper floors from a main bearing structure in the roof largely liberates the ground floor and also widely conceals the bearing elements on the upper levels. The five upper stories are amalgamated by an all-around glazed envelope with closely spaced lamellas running up all the way to the roof, which produces transparency—and thus, perpendicular to the façade, vistas from inside to outside and vice versa—and, when seen from an oblique angle, a closed impression. The dense, tranquil and regular arrangement of the lamellas thus is crucial for the linking with the neighboring buildings. That the figural arrangement of the interior spaces in part impairs or even dominates this tranquil appearance is perceived as disturbing; to what extent the two different lamella depths are meant to reflect these different types of space remains to be investigated. Natural stone or architectural concrete as the defining material of these lamellas is wholly inconsistent with the aspiration to convey the values of innovation and technology, even though the symbolism and haptic character thus projected blends in well with the “stony” context. The five upper levels with different floor-to-floor heights are amalgamated by a spatial figure composed of multi-story, end-to-end traverse spaces, the pivot of which is constituted by the central spatial overlap, which houses free-standing, glazed elevator shafts that run from the ground to the top floor. The various elements of the room program are arranged in an evident and also efficient way with reference to this spatial figure. The escape route concept with widely spaced, façade-integrated stairs running in opposite directions is an outstanding solution that allows the 3rd upper floor to be used as a venue. The maintenance of the fire-protection installations and the difficulty of smoke extraction from the air spaces pose great problems that need to be resolved. The building-services concept is convincingly simple, economic and adequate. All in all, the entry constitutes an important contribution to the competition, its merits being the convincing interior structure and its mediation with the context.