

FINAL JURY REPORT

ONSITE Mugak/ COMPETITION – VITORIA-GASTEIZ

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: Vitoria-Gasteiz

Jury Chair: María Arana - Curator of the fifth edition of the Mugak/ Biennial

Jury Members:

- [Igor Díaz de Guereñu](#): Innovation and Architectural Dissemination Project Manager, Directorate of Housing, Land, and Architecture, Basque Government
- [Unai Gorroño](#): Commercial and Marketing Director, EGOIN WOOD GROUP
- [Alfredo Bengoa](#): Head of Planning and Projects Service, Department of City Model, Urban Planning, Cleaning, Housing, and Environment, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council
- [Maite Apezteguía](#): COAVN Álava
- [Nuño Mardones](#): University of Navarra
- [Sofía Lekka Angelopoulou](#): Editor-in-Chief, designboom
- [María Arana](#): Curator of the Mugak/ Biennial
- [Clara Hurtado](#): Habic Cluster

Introduction

The ONSITE Mugak/ competition in Vitoria-Gasteiz explored the theme “**Castles in the Air or How to Build Utopia Today**”, seeking ephemeral architectural proposals that engage with public spaces, inspire reflection, and generate a significant impact on the community.

The jury evaluated the proposals based on the competition's guidelines, considering architectural quality, technical and economic feasibility, connection to the site, sustainability, and relevance to the Biennial's theme. After extensive deliberations, the jury awarded a **first prize**, a **second prize**, and an **honorable mention**, detailed below.

FIRST PRIZE

Project: **UTOPIA: Prohibido el Paso**

Award: €10,000 + VAT

Evaluation

The jury awarded the first prize to **UTOPIA: Prohibido el Paso** for its ability to generate a strong symbolic and communicative presence in the public space. Represented by a red wall simulating a fictional barrier, the proposal reflects on real and symbolic divisions that fragment society, engaging with projects like Exodus by Rem Koolhaas and current political dynamics surrounding migration and borders.

Relation to the Theme

The project addresses the concept of utopia through its paradox: constructing a wall to challenge the very notion of walls. This reflective gesture invites reinterpretation of borders as fictional constructs, encouraging the public to reflect on boundaries and their societal and territorial impacts. Among the selected proposals, **UTOPIA** acts as an extroverted counterpoint, situating the debate in collective and political realms. Its contrast with the environmental focus of **URA** and the introspection of **Arquitectura de Reflexión** creates a multidimensional dialogue on how to build utopia today.

Relation to the Site

The project transforms the iconic Plaza de la Virgen Blanca into a space rich with meaning, offering an experience that fosters citizen participation and public space appropriation. Conceived as a canvas, the wall invites public intervention, becoming a symbol of collective expression.

Feasibility and Sustainability

While initial challenges regarding construction definition and organizing activities around the wall were noted, the jury believes these can be resolved during development. The ability to dismantle the panels and repurpose them as exhibition pieces or reusable materials strengthens its alignment with sustainability principles.

Conclusion

UTOPIA: Prohibido el Paso is an architectural intervention that not only transforms public space but also generates a powerful social and cultural discourse aligned with the objectives of the Mugak/ Biennial.



SECOND PRIZE

Project: URA: URBAN RAIN ARCHITECTURE

Award: €1,000 + VAT

Evaluation

The jury awarded the second prize to **URA: Urban Rain Architecture** for its innovative and functional approach, integrating rainwater management into public space in an aesthetic and educational manner. The proposal creates an elevated channel that collects and redirects water, transforming a common element into a symbolic and functional resource.

URA addresses utopia through the responsible and poetic management of natural resources, connecting with the environmental dimension of the Biennial's theme. Among the selected proposals, *URA* complements the social provocation of *UTOPIA* with a functional proposal that materializes utopia as a tangible solution to contemporary urban challenges. Its focus contrasts with the emotional introspection of *Arquitectura de Reflexión*, achieving conceptual balance.

The proposal combines functionality and symbolism, offering an innovative interpretation of urban space and promoting reflection on sustainability and natural resources.

HONORABLE MENTION

Project: ARQUITECTURA DE REFLEXIÓN

Award: Symbolic recognition

Evaluation

The honorable mention was awarded to **Arquitectura de Reflexión** for its ability to create an introspective and sensory experience through a serene and poetic architectural intervention. The proposal, a mirrored box surrounded by vegetation, creates a space for introspection that transcends utility and celebrates the connection between people, space, and nature.

The project interprets utopia from a personal and introspective perspective, exploring how spaces can generate significant emotional experiences. Among the selected projects, *Arquitectura de Reflexión* provides an intimate and serene counterpoint to the political discourse of *UTOPIA* and the environmental focus of *URA*, completing the conceptual narrative of the Biennial. Although its impact on public space is more subtle compared to the other awarded proposals, its symbolic message and impeccable technical execution make it a valuable and representative project of the Biennial.

Conclusion

The jury celebrates the quality and diversity of the proposals submitted to this edition of the competition in Vitoria-Gasteiz. Each selected project approaches the concept of utopia in innovative and provocative ways, reaffirming architecture's role as a tool to activate debate about social relationships and the challenges of our urban environment.

The awarded proposals explore how architecture can generate symbolic and dynamic interventions that transform public space into a place for interaction and questioning.

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