

## FINAL JURY REPORT

### ONSITE Mugak/ COMPETITION – DONOSTIA-SAN SEBASTIÁN

Date: December 13, 2024

Location: Donostia-San Sebastián

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

#### Jury Members:

- Pablo García Astraín: Director of Housing, Land, and Architecture
- Iñigo García Villanueva: Councilor of Donostia-San Sebastián City Hall
- Tomás Valenciano: Member of the Governing Board of the Gipuzkoa Delegation of the COAVN
- Aitor García: Co-founder of Indart3D
- Samira Aït-Mehdi: Architect, École d'architecture et de paysage de Bordeaux
- María Arana: Curator of the Mugak/ Biennial
- Clara Hurtado: Cluster Habic

## Introduction

The ONSITE Mugak/ Competition, part of the fifth edition of the International Architecture Biennial of Euskadi Mugak/, aimed to identify and reward proposals that, through ephemeral architecture, reflect on the theme “**Castles in the Air or How to Build Utopia Today**”. The projects were required to integrate values such as innovation, sustainability, architectural quality, and dialogue with the urban environment, creating spaces that foster meaningful encounters and civic debates on contemporary architectural utopias.

During the jury's final session, held on December 13, 2024, in Donostia-San Sebastián, the proposals were evaluated based on the criteria set out in the competition rules. These criteria included architectural and spatial quality, relationship with the environment, alignment with the theme, level of innovation, structural coherence, technical and economic feasibility, and environmental impact.

The jury recognized the high standard of the submitted proposals, reflecting the talent and commitment of the participating teams. After detailed analysis and deliberations, the jury decided to award a **first prize**, a **second prize**, and an **honorable mention**, detailed below.

## FIRST PRIZE

**Project:** LEVEDAD Y DENUNCIA. EL BORDADO COMO UTOPIA EN FEMENINO

**Award:** €10,000 + VAT

### Detailed Evaluation

The jury awarded first prize to *Levedad y denuncia* for its outstanding ability to intertwine aesthetics, materiality, and cultural impact, effectively translating the Biennial's theme “*Castles in the Air*” into a deeply meaningful and reflective architectural proposal. This project stands out for reclaiming embroidery, a tradition historically associated with caregiving and female craftsmanship, elevating it as both an architectural and political tool. Its concept not only reflects on the historical absence of female authors in utopian thought but also asserts their presence through a structure symbolizing struggles for equality, justice, and creativity in the urban realm.

### Relation to the Theme

The project addresses utopia from a feminist perspective, highlighting how traditional practices associated with women, like embroidery, can serve as a medium to imagine and build alternative futures. In this sense, it connects with thinkers such as Thomas More and Lewis Mumford, who understood utopia not as a mere ideal but as a means to transform reality. Here, embroidery acts as a tangible “*castle in the air*”, transcending boundaries between tradition and innovation, past and future.

### Relation to the Site

Situated in Alderdi Eder esplanade, in front of Donostia-San Sebastián City Hall, the project integrates harmoniously with its surroundings. Its structure preserves views of La Concha Bay, a critical element for respecting the site's scenic richness. Additionally, its proximity to play and meeting areas adds social relevance, as these spaces are often frequented by caregivers, especially women. This reinforces its narrative around “care” as a fundamental dimension of contemporary utopias.

### Innovation and Materiality

The proposal utilizes 3D printing technology, aligning with sustainability and the Biennial's objectives. The materiality, based on PLA (a biodegradable material) and other innovations, allows for efficient execution and the possibility of dismantling and reusing its components. This approach explores circular economy principles by offering a second life for the fabricated pieces, which could be transformed into decorative or functional objects, extending their impact beyond the Biennial.

The jury also valued the opportunity to experiment with 3D printing in architecture, emphasizing its aesthetic and functional roles. This aspect engages in dialogue with architectural movements like Archigram or the utopian experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, where technology was seen as a catalyst for new forms of life and coexistence.

### Aesthetic and Spatial Quality

The proposal's delicacy and formal sophistication contrast with values often attributed to ephemeral structures. This "*preciousness*," as noted during deliberations, transforms aesthetics into a political tool, creating a space for contemplation, dialogue, and reflection. The project balances visual lightness with a sense of refuge, becoming a venue for collective activities like workshops and conferences, as well as for public enjoyment.

### Constructive and Economic Feasibility

Although technical challenges were identified, mainly related to the structural stability of the proposal, the jury considers them solvable during the technical and construction phases. The proposal fits within the allocated budget and benefits from the technical support of sponsor Indart3D, reinforcing its feasibility. Its dismantling and reuse capability demonstrate economic and environmental coherence.

### Sustainability

The proposal addresses environmental impact through a life-cycle approach, integrating principles of reuse and recycling. Its lightweight design minimizes resource use, while its dismantlability ensures reduced impact on the installation site. Moreover, by converting potential waste into decorative products for local businesses, the project transcends the Biennial's temporal and geographic limits.

### Conclusion

**Lightness and Protest** is a project that fully meets the objectives of the Mugak/ Biennial, both conceptually and technically. Its ability to generate dialogue between history, technology, and society makes it an emblematic work that not only builds a "*castle in the air*" but demonstrates how architecture can be a driver of social transformation.

## SECOND PRIZE

**Project:** ZARCILLO

**Award:** €1,000 + VAT

### Evaluation

The second prize was awarded to this proposal for its modular and sustainable approach. The use of 3D-printed components with dual functionality (structural brick and reusable planter) aligns with the competition's goals of sustainability and circular economy. Furthermore, it stands out for its dismantling and reuse potential in other contexts.

However, the jury noted a lack of formal innovation, as the project aligns with already conventional aesthetics in the field of 3D printing. Despite its robust concept, a deeper creative exploration to enhance its utopian narrative was desired.

## HONORABLE MENTION

**Project:** LA UTOPIA YA EXISTE

**Award:** Symbolic recognition

### Evaluation

The honorable mention was awarded to this proposal for its formal boldness and innovative interpretation of territory and heritage. The idea of reinterpreting historical elements as "*castles in the air*" and transforming them into utopian visions for the future deeply resonates with the Biennial's theme.

The jury especially appreciated its aesthetic power and ability to spark debates on territory transformation. However, the proposal presents structural and construction limitations that hinder its feasibility under current conditions, relegating it to symbolic recognition rather than immediate technical viability.



## Conclusion

The jury highlights the diversity of approaches and conceptual richness that characterized this edition's proposals. Donostia-San Sebastián served as a platform for reflections on utopia intertwining memory, innovation, and social participation. Collectively, the selected works effectively translate reflections on contemporary architectural utopias into innovative aesthetic and spatial experiences.

The first prize, ***Levedad y denuncia*** excels in synthesizing a historical and social narrative into a project that becomes a space for collective encounter and reflection. The second prize, ***Zarcillo***, offers a modular and sustainable approach, while the honorable mention, ***La utopía ya existe*** is a daring formal and conceptual experiment questioning the future of architecture.

The jury thanks all participants for their effort and creativity and celebrates how architecture can be a powerful instrument to transform and enrich urban experiences.

**Date:** December 13, 2024