

←↑ MUSIC AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

A major music and conference centre is planned for a site on the future cultural axis of the city centre, eastwards in the direction of the Zsolnay factories. The building, which will have a multi-use, acoustically first-rate auditorium for 1000 concertgoers, will be the new home of the Pannon Philharmonic Orchestra. It is organized like a snail's shell with the concert hall in the centre and the other functions grouped around it. The roof of the complex, below which are a café, restaurant, bookshop and practice rooms, has been designed as a forecourt/meeting place.

Architects: építéstudió kft.: Ferenc Keller, Richárd Hönich, Tamás Fialovszky, Benedek Súlyom

Art gallery, library and music/conference centre, Pécs

Hungarian firms win competitions for Pécs, European Capital of Culture 2010.

HUNGARY —TEXT: EMIEL LAMERS

Along with the German city of Essen and Turkey's Istanbul, the southern Hungarian city of Pécs has been selected as a European Capital of Culture in 2010. During the EU selection process, Pécs promoted itself as a 'city without borders' and as a 'gateway to the Balkans', thereby beating other competitors that included the Hungarian capital Budapest.

For a provincial city of over 160,000 inhabitants, the main attraction of achieving the status of cultural capital, an EU initiative of the 1980s, is the huge amount of money that EU and the national and regional governments make available for new developments in the field of culture. To provide suitable accommodation for the many exhibitions, lectures and events, the city has designated five big projects. For these projects alone the EU subsidy is 125 million euros.

So far three competitions for the design of new cultural buildings have been completed: an art gallery, a regional library with information centre and a music and conference centre. In addition, the city is currently holding a competition for the redesign of public space. A fifth competition, for the

redevelopment of the Zsolnay ceramics factory as a cultural district, has yet to be launched.

All three competitions held to date have been won by architecture firms from Budapest, a fact deplored by the local architectural community. From a European perspective, however, the absence of a foreign architect among the winners can be seen as a missed opportunity. It might have had a positive effect on the largely closed and introverted Hungarian architectural world. In any event, there is already a lot of international interest in the redevelopment of the famous Zsolnay factories. Last September, for example, an international, on-site workshop was organized for masters degree architecture students at the universities of Pécs, Budapest, Sicily and Delft. And in Delft the case study has now been incorporated into the current masters course; Dutch students will this year be designing an art academy on the former factory site.

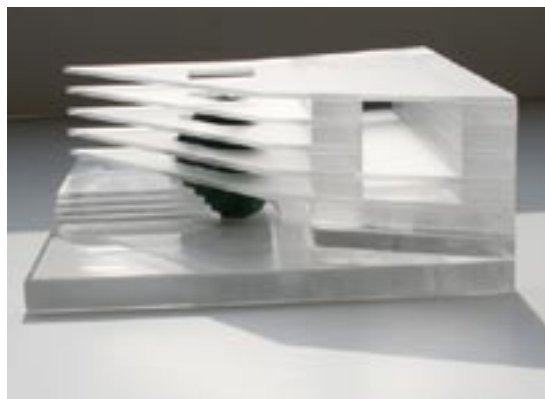
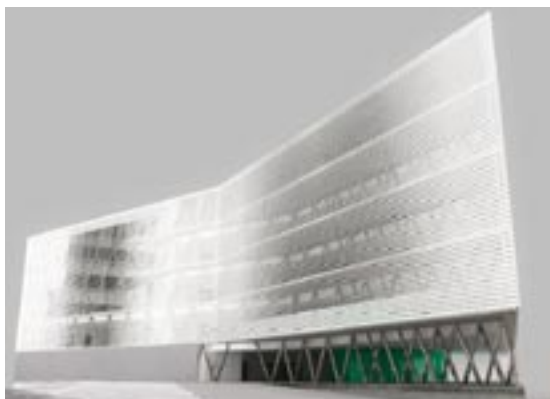
In the run-up to 2010, dealing with the several strands of funding and the various vested interests is proving to be troublesome for the provincial city. Initially, Gábor Freivogel, the cultural capital's architectural manager, gave the local organization an international cachet. Born in Pécs, Freivogel has for many years worked as an architect in Germany. But thanks to his ongoing dissatisfaction with the way local politicians interfered with the management office, he has quit the scene and returned to Germany. One can only hope that the current management team will be able to live up to the city's towering European cultural ambitions.

Another question mark hangs over the fate of the large-scale projects after 31 December 2010. A year passes in the blink of an eye, but buildings have a much longer life span. The conference centre will at any rate be used by the university which is so short of space that it is forced to hold conferences in Budapest. And if the city's cultural budget is not entirely exhausted, perhaps we will be able to continue to enjoy exhibitions in the art gallery and concerts in the concert hall post-2010. ←

↓ REGIONAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE

In place of the current city and provincial library, a new regional library-cum-information centre will be built in the south-east of the city. The hope is that the new, 6000 m² complex will give more inhabitants of this poor province access to a wide variety of information. The triangular design by Mihály Balázs's team leaves part of the site unbuilt in order to create a public forecourt. Inside the building, a beehive-shaped atrium spirals above the reception desk.

Architects: Mihály Balázs, Balázs Tatár, Dávid Török, Miklós Már



↑ ART GALLERY

A former provincial government office on the museum street in the historical centre is being converted into an exhibition space. Among other things, it will acquire new wings capable of hosting large-scale, temporary exhibitions. Of the 42 entries for the open competition, the plan by Tamás N. Nagy and János Somosi won the first prize. In their design the large-scale programme is distributed over three long narrow volumes that take their cue from the traditional plot division, at right angles to the museum street. In the existing wall along that street, a new entrance to the complex will be created.

Architects: Tamás N. Nagy, János Somosi, Sándor Galambos, Balázs Mechle, Béla Gál, Áron Vass-Eysen, Livia Varga, Péter Czeglédi, Ferenc Haász

