



PRESS RELEASE

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AUSTRIAN QUERKRAFT ARCHITEKTEN NAMED AS THE 2024 LAUREATE OF THE EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE, THE AWARD THAT IS REGARDED INTERNATIONALLY AS EUROPE'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS TRIBUTE

Querkraft Architekten known for their poetic pragmatism, originality, authenticity, charisma, and a strong identity receives Europe's highest honor during 'The City and The World' Athens Symposium and a gala awards ceremony at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece this September 21

The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies announce that the Austrian office Querkraft Architekten led by the firm's three partners Jakob Dunkl, Gerd Erhartt, and Peter Sapp have won this year's 2024 European Prize for Architecture.

Following a deeply poetic and thoughtful pragmatism, the architectural office, founded in 1998, is dedicated to projects and processes that always focus on the human being and with a strong sense of humanism.

The firm is known globally for its outside-the-box thinking as a way in which to enhance the lives of people with a design empathy and curiosity that accompanies the office through the design process to the final construction.

"For more than 25 years, Querkraft has been an internationally active and an award-winning architectural office with a strong focus on individual architecture," states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine, architecture critic and Museum President/CEO of The Chicago Athenaeum.

"Their work, dedicated to building and maintaining public spaces, echoes the highest possible efficiency to create emotional, as well as simple solutions, which generate additional value for clients and the final end-users."

"The office has worked effortlessly at all ranges and typologies from creative concepts to high-rise buildings and

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interior architecture to thoughtful sustainable alternatives.”

“Over the years, Querkraft Architekten has created high-quality designs for housing, cultural buildings, schools and universities, kindergartens, office buildings, industrial buildings, redevelopments, as well as building in existing structures, bridges, art installations, and more as part of the office’s extensive portfolio.”

“Their projects are at their strongest when they are managed from the initial idea and lateral thinking to the finished implementation.”

“In doing so, Querkraft Architekten has developed a master plan with the same care as every final detail.”

“The firm supervises projects in all service phases from the development of the use to the project’s execution as general planners or as creative consultants.”

“Ultimately,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine, “Querkraft Architekten creates an architecture that celebrates the human user; an architecture that is thought-provoking and fun, a design that is intensely lively as it is socially, environmentally friendly, sustainable, full of joy, and future-proof.”

“But more so, Querkraft is unabashedly in love with human scale.”


“The office has meticulously reexplored and redefined what is really ‘human-centered’ in design as they incorporate that philosophy and that knowledge into each and every of their projects from the new IKEA Store in Vienna to the EXPO Austrian Pavilion Dubai.”

“For this office,” affirms Narkiewicz-Laine, “people come first and that is why the office develops small, fine details that bring joy to the users—from pictograms that tell users interesting background information on the project to interactive greening tools.”

Each year, The European Prize for Architecture is awarded jointly by The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies and The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design to architects who have made a commitment to forward the principles of European humanism and the art of architecture.

The European Prize for Architecture is not a “lifetime of achievement award,” but rather serves as an impetus to support new ideas, to encourage and foster more challenge-making and forward-thinking about buildings and the environment, and to prompt the pushing of the envelope to obtain an even greater, more profound result. The Prize also honors the commitment and achievements of the best European architects who have determined a more critical, intellectual, and artistic approach to the design of buildings and cities.

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Previous Laureates include: Bjarke Ingels (Denmark), Graft Architects (Germany), TYIN Architects (Norway), Marco Casagrande (Finland), Alessandro Mendini (Italy), Santiago Calatrava (Spain/Switzerland), LAVA Laboratory for Visionary Architecture (Germany), Manuelle Gautrand (France), Sergei Tchoban (Russia/Germany), Henning Larsen Architects (Denmark), Wolfgang Tschapeller (Austria), Francine Houben and Dick van Gameren of the Dutch firm Mecanoo (The Netherlands), and Christoph Ingenhoven (Germany).

Last year, The European Prize for Architecture was given to three imprisoned Turkish architectural watch dogs and champions of human rights: Ayse Mücella Yapici, Tayfun Kahraman, and Can Atalay.

Founded in 1998, Querkraft Architekten is located in the Viennese-style Old Stock Exchange Palace designed by Theophil Freiherr von Hansen in 1870 and 1877 on Ringstraße in the heart of Vienna.

Here, the three partners—Jakob Dunkl, Gerd Erhartt, and Peter Sapp—have installed a raw, functional, and ‘roll-up your shirtsleeves’ architectural workshop in the magnificent, historic building and with the firm’s doors wide open to any new idea.

Jakob Dunkl, born in 1963 in Frankfurt/Main, studied architecture at the Technical University Vienna graduating in 1990. From 2001-2004, he taught at the Technical University of Vienna.

In 2001-2004, he had a guest professorship at the Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, USA.

From 2002–2004, he worked at IG Architektur and from 2010-2012 at Plattform Baukulturpolitik in Vienna. In 2012-2016, he was a presenter of the architectural documentary *Meine Stadt/Ma Ville* for the TV channel Arte.

Since 2020, he has served as a member of the Advisory Committee for Art in Public Space in Vienna. He is a member of the BDA Niedersachsen.

Born in 1961, Peter Sapp studied architecture at the Technical University of Vienna, receiving his degree in 1994.

In 2001, he became a guest professor at the Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, USA.

From 2001-2004, he taught at the Technical University of Vienna. From 2004-2011, he also taught summer school at the Technical University of Vienna in Motovun, Croatia.

From 2007-2010, he served as a guest reviewer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in cooperation with Rüdiger Lainer and Hiromi Hosoya.



He was a professor for design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich from 2006-2011.

From 2016-2018, he was a member of the Design Committee for the City of Linz.

Born in Vienna in 1964, Gerd Erhardt studied architecture at the Technical University Vienna, receiving his diploma in 1992.

From 2001-2004, he taught at the Technical University of Vienna. In 2002, he was a guest professor at the Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, USA; and in 2009, a guest professor at the Technical University of Vienna.

In 2024, all three partners became visiting professors at the Czech Technical University in Prague.

Michael Zinner was a former partner until 2004.

In English, Querkraft means “sheer force.”

And right away in 1998, the firm consisting of 20 members started to produce high-speed, powerful ideas for exceptional residential buildings, corporate headquarters, community centers, art installations, renovations, extensions, high-rises, apartment buildings, and museum spaces in Austria and abroad.

Force and an architectural dynamic and rigor combined.

A first milestone for the new firm came in 2004 with the eye-catching design for the Adi Dassler Brand Center for events, presentations, and meetings at Adidas headquarters in Herzogenaurach near Nuremberg, Germany.

For this building, the architects produced a clear, hard-edged building structure that radiates tranquility through its black, glass shell and at the same time is dynamized by its embedding in the landscape—a “black crystal.”


The new headquarters building is a gleaming black abstract cube, 170 meters long by 70 meters wide.

Part of its volume is buried underground.

By day the reflective glass facade merges with the surroundings, but at night it transforms into an illuminated shop window.

Visitors enter the building at the highest point of the foyer, descending dramatically via broad steps to a large

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cube inserted into the space.

For the new Museum Liaunig in Neuhaus/Suha, Austria (2006-2008), the architects devised a new visionary art institution at the foot of the Alps.

Visitors are immediately dazzled by a huge cantilevered concrete box emerging from a grassy hillock, apparently floating free over the thoroughfare.

The building's shape—160 meters-long, 13 meters-wide—is designed as a concrete tube forming a single 2,000-square meter hall where paintings and sculptures are exposed.

The Museum Liaunig displays the collection of the industrialist Herbert Liaunig, consisting of about 3,000 artworks by Austrian contemporary artists, 200 of which are displayed at the museum on a rotational basis.

Along with contemporary artworks, the museum houses a beautiful collection of 600 pieces of geometric African jewelry dating from the 19th to the 20th century.

In order to reduce construction costs and energy consumption, the museum is largely built underground.

The building projects out on two sides over steep-sided ground, high up in the landscape.

A cut through the hill marks a precise intervention in nature.

Planted into the site the new museum emerges more like a work of landart.


Only a small part of the outstretched museum building is visible.

The building cantilevers an impressive 30 meters out, over a steep bank towards the approach road—clearly visible to approaching visitors.

The building's core is a 160-meter long, fully daylight exhibition hall, with protected terraces at each end.

The continuous 13-meter wide, seven-meter-high room is covered by a part translucent curved-skin—an industrial element permitting daylight.

Several ceiling windows pour natural light into the gallery.



Two large terraced-openings at both ends of the tube offer stunning views of the surrounding landscape; one overlooking the street and the hills behind and the other facing the Drava River valley.

While Querkraft Architekten's client list started to grow naturally by way of successful competition entries, the architects received more and more direct commissions from companies and institutions who have realized the added value for employees and the general public that their projects entail.

For the new entrance foyer of the Technisches Museum Vienna (2010), the architects wanted a design for what a museum should be: an "out of the ordinary" experience.

They designed this new museum foyer giving a solution to various constraints, technical and functional of course, but also perceptive and emotional.

Given the need to improve the physical and emotional qualities of the long-outdated entrance of the Technical Museum in Vienna, the architects created their version of the "dendriform column."

The non-structural, tree-shaped envelopes introduced by the Austrian practice, along with acting as shading aids, also provide seating for the public, acoustic absorption, and lighting.

Querkraft Architekten's new bold and urban-correct IKEA City Center in Vienna (2021) heroically introduces a stunning new vision and new sustainable concept for an urban retail store that is usually positioned outside cities near an airport.

From a three-phase architecture competition involving several workshops the firm emerged as winner.

This IKEA store, car-free and totally urban, makes an important contribution to a living and totally ecological city with excellent connections to the public transportation system and an inviting roof terrace.

The total project's aim was to be a "good neighbor" and to fit comfortably in the urban context.

The building's gridded external shell recalls a set of shelves. This 4.3-metre-deep, shelf-like zone runs around the building and provides shade. It allows spaces to expand, provides room for terraces and greenery, as well as for servant elements like lifts, escape stairs and building services.

The entrance level is a lively place—a generous void will link it to the retail areas that stretch in front of it along Mariahilfer Straße.



A void extending right through the interior of the building allows visual contacts between the different stories.

Trees on the facade and on the roof have a perceptible impact on the microclimate with trees placed at different heights and depths in the building—more planting than would be possible on the building's ground area.

In the “Urban Heat Island-Strategy Plan” of the City of Vienna tree plantings are one of the most important measures.

The climbing plants and trees of the IKEA furniture store have a cooling and humidifying effect—like a kind of natural air conditioning system.

The mixed-use store, complete with a hostel hotel, creates a building that is alive 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For EXPO Austrian Pavilion Dubai (2021), the architects offer the necessary space to enter into dialogue with the essential questions for a common, better, and more sustainable future.

The Viennese coffee house, which stands for interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange, served as a metaphor for the pavilion.

The Dubai pavilion poses one of the most important questions about the future and gives a possible answer: careful and respectful use of our earthly resources.

For the pavilion, Querkraft created a calm and sensual space through a network of 38 intersecting cones.

The dialogue between local building traditions and intelligent Austrian climate engineering is seen as an opportunity.

It enables conventional air conditioning technology to be largely avoided, saving three quarters of the energy needed for a comparable building, and thus making a big contribution to the energy debate.

Through the careful, sensible use of local building materials, prefabrication and subsequent reuse of the pavilion, a sustainable attitude toward our throwaway society is demonstrated.

The haptic structure of the clay plaster on the inside conveys natural comfort.

The exotic, mesmerizing cone shapes easily develop an aesthetic between light and shadow that invites the



visitor to linger and explore, contradicting the hectic environment of an Expo.

Today, green high-rise projects are on the firm's front agenda, showing how the projects have grown along with the office.

These recent green, tall buildings clearly mirror the firm's keen interest in the environment and humanity.

Karlheinz Hora Hof (2022), new social housing project on Handelskai Straße in Vienna, offers high-quality living for existing and new residents with plenty of outdoor space and rooms for the community. A continuous garden deck open to the public.

On top of this garden deck, seven residential blocks in different heights arise with a combined 332 subsidized residential units with private loggias, an unobstructed view over the river and a color-statement to its surrounding.

With slender building volumes and a continuous garden deck as a "fifth façade," a modern and open living environment with a view of the Danube is created for the entire neighborhood.

The activated Wohngasse, which runs between the existing buildings and the new buildings, is both a connecting and structuring element for the entire complex.

The shared outdoor space is accessed via generous open staircases.

The 400-meter long green connecting platform offers communicative recreational zones and open spaces for lingering, exercising and gardening and improves the connection to the surrounding area.

The Taborama High-Rise Residential Building in Vienna (2023), highlighted by greenery, forms a protected courtyard bay in cooperation with its immediate surroundings.

The horizontally structured high-rise building forms a protected courtyard bay in cooperation with its immediate surroundings.

The darkly designed outer floors with generous ceiling heights structure the building and are characterized by a surrounding balcony zone. The other floors are connected to the living areas by balconies with different shapes, dividing the large volume into manageable social units.

Plant troughs and rod elements in two shapes support the horizontal layering and encourage the residents to



green the building intensively.

For the color concept, the architects brought in the artist Ingo Nussbaumer, whose design concept gave the high-rise apartment building its characteristic interiors.

“From residential high-rises to the inner-city car-free IKEA retail store, Querkraft Architekten has added value to both the rational and the emotional factor in these projects,” states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine.

“Querkraft Architekten likes to dream big.”

“At the core of the office’s big dream are visions of sustainability within the urban context.”

“To explain the central idea of their company’s philosophy, the firm refers to ‘poetical pragmatism’.”

“While looking for the most transparent, uncomplicated solution, optimizing each project to a point when it can’t be optimized any further, they never forget about the emotional component of the architecture they deliver.”

“It is only the successful combination of heart and mind that leaves us satisfied in the end,” states the firm.

“Querkraft Architekten thus fosters an architecture, which is both lively and livable.”

“By designing buildings that create added value for the inhabitants, they realize emotionally sustainable projects.”

“Always characterized by elegance, restraint, a sense of permanence, as well as clear compositions and refined detailing, Querkraft Architekten’s buildings each time exude clarity, surprise, sophisticated contextuality, and confident presence.”

“In an era of excessive commercialization, over-designing, and over-exaggeration, this firm has always achieved balance: between a modern minimalistic architectural language and freedom of expression, between abstract statements and rigorous elegance never devoid of complexity.”

“While preserving a meticulous yet consistent quality of design, Querkraft Architekten has continually worked across a wide array of building types from public civic buildings to commercial, residential, and retail structures.”

“Such a capacity to distil and perform meditated design operations is a dimension of sustainability that has not been obvious in recent years: sustainability as pertinence, not only eliminates the superfluous, but is also the first

step to creating structures able to last, physically and culturally,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine.

“Above all else, bringing joy and a sense of fun to their projects is the essence of this firm’s design philosophy.”

Querkaft Architekten is the 21st Laureate of the European Prize for Architecture.

The formal ceremony and gala dinner for what has come to be known throughout the world as Europe’s highest honor for architecture will be held at a Gala Dinner at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece—the birthplace of Western Architecture—on Saturday, September 21, 2024.

Ticket information is available through The European Centre’s Museum in Athens at +30/210 342 8511 or in the U.S. at +1/815-777-4444 or by email at konstadina@europeanarch.eu.

An exhibition “Querkaft Architekten” opens at The European Centre (74 Mitropoleos Street) in Athens that same evening.

For more information and press photographs contact: Ms. Konstadina Geladaki, Director of Communications, Contemporary Space Athens at konstadina@europeanarch.eu



Gerd Erhardt, Peter Sapp, and Jakob Dunkl, Querkraft Architekten zt GmbH. Photograph by Guillermo Alvarez, 2018.

About The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies (www.europeanarch.eu) is dedicated to public education concerning all aspects of the built environment - from entire cities to individual buildings - including the philosophical issues of arts and culture that ultimately give the final shape to design. A high emphasis exists on contemporary values and aesthetics, conservation and sustainability, and the theoretical exploration and advancement of art and design as the highest expression of culture and urbanism.

About The Chicago Athenaeum (www.chi-athenaeum.org) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide public education about the significance of architecture and design and how those disciplines can have a positive effect on the human environment.



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