To the Point

Everything you always wanted to know about architecture

WHY do urbanites live in tiny prefab boxes?

WHEN did architects start to adore banality?

WHERE do all the graduate architects vanish to?

WHAT is an anarchist house?
Historical Landing

Challenging the site given in the competition brief, DGT submitted a design for the Estonian National Museum that specified the nearby grounds of a former Soviet military base.

The new Estonian National Museum opens its doors on 1 October, more than a decade after French firm Dorel Ghotmeh Tame Architects won an international competition for its design in 2003. The building sits on a former landing strip that is part of Raadi, a large military base on the outskirts of Tartu that is being converted into a theme park by Estonian landscaper Kino Ou and Belgian landscape architect Bas Sauzen. The place is ideal for experimental architecture.

Entirely glazed – adorning, the glass panels are screenprinted Estonian traditional motifs – the 355-m-long museum includes 6,400 m² of public space and 6,300 m² of exhibition space. Its concrete roof features a gradual incline, rising 3 m from the former runway at one end and reaching a height of 14 m at the other. The building has an impressive 40-m-long, gravity-defying cantilever. Beneath the cantilever, on the west side of the building, a monumental entrance conveys a sense of grandeur.

The addition of an entrance on the east side was intended to make a visit to the museum more dynamic and the building less hierarchical. The two entrances, which express the plurality of Estonia’s national identity, enable visitors to start their tour from galleries displaying the permanent collection or from the section that hosts temporary exhibitions. Exploiting the horizontality of the building to its fullest, the architects situated offices and an auditorium on the mezzanine level. Storage space is in the basement. Interestingly, the museum bridges a small lake that is visible from the west entrance hall. The view is a reminder of Estonia’s Baltic coast, which has a length of 3,760 km and is marked by countless inlets and straits. The new museum is at once a poetic and political manifesto.
Dorell Ghotmeh Tane Architects

Tartu — Estonia

The museum is heavily charged by Specter military base...