

arcVision Prize **Women and Architecture** by Italcementi Group

Introduction

The Italcementi Group has always paid careful attention to Architecture, as a tool for sustainable transformation of the territory, and to Innovation, as a form of workshop encouraging dialogue among all the players in the building community.

With its know-how and materials, the Group has always been at the side of architects working on innovative projects with an advanced technological content. From experimental work on materials with Gio Ponti and Pier Luigi Nervi for the Pirelli skyscraper and the Vatican Audience Hall, to cooperation with Richard Meier on the Italcementi i.lab Research Center in Bergamo, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao with Frank O. Gehry, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France with Dominique Perrault, and the MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome with Zaha Hadid. A dialogue which dates back to 1864, when the first tests for the production of cement were carried out in a small kiln near Bergamo using marl limestone from nearby hills, and arrives to our days with operations in 22 countries and 4 continents: 150 years of history and innovation.

Italcementi laboratory research and experimental field work have provided a foundation for the complex design ideas of today's leading architects: development of sophisticated products and advanced structural and technological solutions; optimization of construction techniques and green methodologies and materials for sustainable buildings. The challenge is intelligent construction, establishing the right balance between science and aesthetics, between statics and creative inspiration: where architecture is the synthesis of design and engineering, and attains its formal value through its structural characteristics.

Why is the Italcementi Group organizing an architecture award for women? Women are more and more important players in contemporary architecture, creators of compositions that are particularly sensitive to the needs of citizens, human relations and the development of an environment fit for its inhabitants. The Italcementi Group wants to back this trend and make it an essential feature of the world of design. In recent years, the Group has become increasingly interested in strengthening the role of women in the workplace and in society, in parallel with its on-going commitment and attention to building construction and, in particular, to sustainable architecture.

The Italcementi Group wants to be an active proponent and interpreter of affirmative action by creating initiatives that recognize female designers who bring authentic new qualities in theoretical and practical design solutions for architecture in an economic, social and cultural context.

This is the thinking behind **arcVision Prize – Women and Architecture**, an international award dedicated to the women designers who have best interpreted the role of the architect through significant civil, residential, social, cultural and educational construction projects.

The Prize is part of the wider Italcementi Group **arcVision** cultural project. **arcVision** aims to a multidisciplinary narrative to portray architecture not just as design, but also as materials and engineering solutions, as an economic driver, as a creative medium and a realized entity, as client and end user, as social growth and cultural reflection, as urban development and as a tool for the community and the environment.

For more than ten years, **arcVision** has been promoting a wide range of initiatives focusing on architecture and the economy, ranging from exhibitions, seminars, workshops and meetings to the publication of the eponymous magazine, books and a dedicated website.

The Project

arcVision Prize

The Prize aims at highlighting women's achievements in contemporary world architecture by focusing on the qualities a modern designer needs for an original approach in developing advanced, non-conventional solutions, and a sharper, more mature sensitivity to the human and social context.

The **arcVision Prize** is an annual award for a female architect whose work includes technological innovation, sustainability and design culture in a harmonious combination of function and style. The Prize will give preference to designers who operate in particularly sensitive conditions, as regards both project type and context.

The Nominees are selected from a group of candidates indicated by a pool of expert Advisors. The Advisors' recommendations are then assessed by a technical-cultural Commission—with the Prize Scientific Director, Italcementi Group representatives and two independent experts—who draw up a shortlist of nominations to be submitted to the judgment of the international Jury that will meet in Bergamo from March 5th to 6th, 2015.

The Prize results will be officially announced during the Jury press conference which will be held at **i.lab**, the Italcementi Group Research and Innovation Center in Bergamo, on March 6th, 2015, to celebrate together the International Women's Day.

Profile of the women designers

Designers recommended for the Award must:

- have designed at least one building (either built or in planning stages) presenting essentially innovative functional and technological solutions and values, with particular attention to sustainability issues;
- ideally, have conducted research—in the field or in a teaching/academic sphere—on the development of innovative solutions for building systems;
- have designed alone or jointly with other architects the projects presented. In this respect, the purpose of the arcVision Prize is to highlight all the women architects active in the profession today, irrespective of whether they work in a firm of architects, independently, alone or with other partners, provided that their contribution to the project and, more generally, to the work of the practice can be clearly identified;
- possibly, have been able to develop the fundamentals of their work in educational, theoretical or communication activities, and more generally to participate of the social concern expected by an architect in his/her contemporary role in society;
- not have been a candidate for the previous year's award.

Criteria for the selection of nominations and projects

In line with Italcementi business strategies, the arcVision Prize gives particular emphasis to the innovation and sustainability of the projects and buildings presented, based on the standards described briefly below.

Innovation and technological progress

New design concepts, different approaches to construction techniques and processes, attention to the future life of the building: ability to accommodate future technological upgrades. Development of a design model that can be replicated in other projects. Use of technologies to optimize the building's performance with regard to functional requirements, and also to optimize financial outlay.

Environmental quality, economic use of resources

The projects should aim not only to improve living conditions for their users, but also to safeguard the existing natural and/or manmade environment.

Optimal use and conservation of local energy resources is essential, also as an educational benchmark for future projects.

Social responsibility, professional ethics, promotion of community values

Maximum attention to ethical values in project development, contractual procedures, use of manpower. In general, respect for the social, individual and cultural values of the local community, throughout the construction process.

Participation (where possible) of the local community in the project planning process: transparency, correctness and consensual decision making.

Emphasis on team work, both during the design process and in the creation of user/designer work groups.

Formal research, material aesthetics, innovative language

Preference will be given to the work of female architects committed to creating new aesthetic codes as distinguishing elements of the project, compatibly with the existing environment and culture.

A point of particular interest will be the redefinition of new or existing materials, as elements for technological and also expressive growth: in the belief that the progressive value of architecture embraces all aspects of design innovation.

Advisors, technical/cultural Commission and Jury

The Advisors include critics, institutions, architectural media journalists, and executives from the Italcementi Group's international management team. Their task is to indicate potential nominees of particular interest. They are asked to make their recommendations on the basis of the profile set out above.

The technical/cultural Commission that assesses the recommendations and selects the candidates includes the Scientific Director of the Prize, Italcementi Group representatives and two independent experts: the Commission provides the members of the Jury with the final candidates' shortlist.

The members of the Jury, a deliberately all-female group, are professionals of distinction in architecture and entrepreneurship and more generally, in the promotion of socio-economic sustainable innovation, with a broad background of knowledge and expertise in promoting a new cultural map with which the work of the nominees is ideally consistent.

Prize

- A two-week research project and workshop (during Milan Design Week, April 2015) at i.lab, the Italcementi Group Research and Innovation Center in Bergamo, designed by Richard Meier, which also acts as a center to promote innovative technologies and practices.
- A monetary award of € 50,000, part of which the winner may decide to donate to social architecture programs of her choice.

Communication

A communication program will be organized to report on the progress of the competition, with a final publication providing profiles of the finalists and a short essay on the career of the winner.

The Prize results will be officially announced during the Jury press conference which will be held at i.lab, the Italcementi Group Research and Innovation Center in Bergamo, on March 6th, 2015, to celebrate together the International Women's Day.

The winner will talk about her professional experience in a lecture during *Milan Design Week* (April 2015), as part of the "Millennium" Meetings with Architecture organized by the Italcementi Group.

Competition rules

To compete for the Prize, invited candidates must submit the following documentation:

- Formal acceptance of the nomination.
- Selection of up to 4 projects (either built or in planning stages), including at least one work of social/cultural use:
 - 8/10 high-definition pictures of each project (jpg format – 300 dpi), including drawings
 - A description of each project (1,800 keystrokes each).

- A formal release authorizing the copyright-free use of images/texts/drawings for the Prize communication purpose.
- Photograph (a close-up shot).
- A full C.V. (according to the format provided by the arcVision Prize organizing committee) including:
 - A brief statement of the candidate's vision: motivations and objectives of her work (1,000 keystrokes)
 - A short biography (1,800 keystrokes)
 - Education / Professional experience / Teaching and other experience
 - Main recent projects (either built or in planning stage)
 - Awards
 - Date and place of birth.
- Contact details (Address/Email/Tel/Mobile/Skype).

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