

Renzo Piano World Tour 2018

PRESS RELEASE

The Renzo Piano World Tour Award 2018, which took three young architecture graduates around the world for 40 days, ended in Genoa on July 25th. Together they visited 226 masterpieces of world architecture, including 28 by Renzo Piano, on three continents: Europe, Oceania, and America.

“The art of construction around the world, forty days of architecture from the RPBW studio” award was promoted by the Renzo Piano Foundation, with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, one of the largest philanthropic organizations in the world, and with the Botin Foundation, a historical Spanish foundation the scope of which is the creation of development starting from creative talent.

Renzo Piano: “Travel means discovery, the unexpected, you search for one thing and find another. Travel is a bit like going to a big library to look for a book: it’s true that you’re looking for that book, but while looking for that book you will find many others. There’s surprise, there’s discovery and then there’s the realization that you’ve found a fortune: you were born in Italy. This is something quite important.”

Rome, July 30, 2018. The last stage, at the Genova RPBW’s studio, ended on July 25th, concluding the trip around the world in 40 days of Ioanna Mitropoulou (Greece, School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens), Ricardo Fernandez Gonzalez (Spain, Polytechnic University of Madrid), and Thomas Pepino (Italy, University of Studies of Padova), the three young winners of the 2018 edition of the Renzo Piano World Tour Award.

From the brand new Palace of Justice which soars in the neighborhood of Clichy-Batignolles of Paris, in full constructive ferment, to the headquarters of the New York Times in the Big Apple, recognized last May by the Council of Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. From the recent Botin Center in Santander, avant-guard center dedicated to art, facing the bay of the Cantabrian city and inaugurated just over a year ago, to the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center (1998) in Nouméa, New Caledonia. The trip taken by the three young architects reached three continents: Oceania, Europe, and America. Besides the architecture of Renzo Piano and of the RPBW, the itinerary included numerous visits to architecture of the great masters, like, just to name a few, the Phillips Exeter Library by Louis Kahn in Exeter, New Hampshire (USA), the Guggenheim of New York by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Sydney Opera House by Jorn Utzon, Farnsworth House (Illinois) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and the Ozenfant House by Le Corbusier in Paris.

The three graduates stopped in 15 cities: Athens, Santander, Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Sydney, Nouméa, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Chicago, Boston, New York, London, and Genoa. They visited the studios of the RPBW in Paris, New York, and Genoa, and two construction sites that the Genovese architectural study is working on. These are the new normale supérieure de Cachan which is being erected on the campus of Paris-Saclay in the south of Paris, and the university campus of Columbia University in construction in West Harlem on Manhattan island where RPBW has already finished two buildings: the Jerome L. Greene Science Center and the Lenfest Center for the Arts, while the University Forum and Academic Conference Center is being built.

The Renzo Piano World Tour prize is at its second edition. It was established in 2017 by Habitat 2020 and ProViaggi Architettura with the Renzo Piano Foundation and expanded in the 2018 edition thanks to the involvement of the Botin Foundation and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, clients of recent works by Renzo Piano. The Stavros Niarchos cultural center in Athens, inaugurated in June 2016, is an offshoot of the Greek foundation of the same name. It’s a multipurpose center which includes the Greek National Opera with a 1400 seat theatre, the national library which measures 24000 square meters, a 170,000 square meter public park, public pedestrian areas and a grand canal. The Spanish Foundation is a client, instead, of the Botin Center of Santander, dedicated to art and its propagation and is open to the public since June 2017. A building covered in an iridescent ceramic “skin”, facing the bay of the same name in the Cantabrian city.



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The tour of 40 days set off on June 16th, from the Athens cultural center.

With the 2018 edition, the number of winners has gone from one to three. Last year it was Silvia Pellizzari (graduated in 2015 in Building Engineering/Architecture at the University of Studies at Padova) to win the voyage, recognized for her thesis on urban regeneration, a topic dear to the architect and Italian senator-for-life. Her experience of a 40 day trip amongst the works of Renzo Piano Building Workshop had become a book, a travelogue recently published by the publishing house Lettera 22, and entitled "Renzo Piano World Tour 01. A voyage of 40 days discovering the architecture of RPBW".

This year the prize has been consolidated into an annual event. Other than the University of Studies of Padova, the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens and the Polytechnic University of Madrid also became involved. The tasks of University and Foundation are quite different: the first are in charge of the selection and the second have donated the money for the trips. Each university has selected "its" graduate (with undergraduate or master's degree), especially by evaluating: the portfolio, the resume, travel experience abroad, and knowledge of English. Essential requirement to access the selection was to have written one's thesis on the topic "Art of building: the importance of structural detail". For both editions, the organization was entrusted to ProViaggiArchitettura, an agency specialized architectural itineraries.

The winners who have just ended their 40-day tour are : Ioanna Mitropoulou, graduated from the school of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens; Ricardo Fernandez Gonzalez, graduated from the Polytechnic University of Madrid; and Thomas Pepino, graduated from the Polytechnic University of Turin, who also has an Inter-University second-level degree in Architectural and Urban Design from the University of Padova and the University of Catania.

The journey according to Renzo Piano

"There are those who have written marvelous pages, even poetic, there's a Greek poet, Kavafis, who wrote Ithaca. Ithaca is a beautiful poem in which it is said that it's not Ithaca that counts but it's the journey looking for Ithaca that counts. The journey is the discovery, the journey is life. Of course, you need Ithaca because at least you know that there's a place you'll never get to, but which attracts you nonetheless. It's a poetic way to express one's self but it's true that in the journey there is discovery, there is the unexpected, you look for one thing and find another. The journey is a bit like going into a big library to look for a book: it's true that you're looking for that book but while looking for it you find many others. There's surprise, there's discovery and then there's the realization that you have found a fortune: you were born in Italy. This is something quite important." This is how the architect Renzo Piano describes the significance of the journey.

Renzo Piano Foundation

The Foundation was built in Genoa in 2004. It's a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of the architect's profession, which carries out studies and research in the field of architecture. The Foundation's program is divided in several activities: conservation and enhancement of the archive, training and dissemination. It was founded due to the realization of the importance of conservation and the availability of project documents accumulated in 40 years of work.

Among the activities related to training, there is the promotion of a series of internships at the offices of the RPBW in Genoa and Paris. The internships, lasting six months, are entirely financed by a scholarship made available by the Foundation itself, but the universities involved (some of which are among the most important in the world) choose each time, according to criteria suggested by RPBW studio, the most deserving students.

