

PRESENCE

We all 'know' concrete. It's all around us. It is the world's most used construction material. We are aware of most of its benefits, as well as most of its challenges. When following the current debates, one may argue that nowadays most materials are perceived and reviewed mainly in the light of their environmental impact. However, materials are much more than their respective functional and ecological qualities. Their – architectural – impact reaches beyond the capacity to carry loads or withstand forces, beyond the sheltering qualities of keeping wind and rain out or providing for a comfortable climate. It reaches even beyond architecture's main objective of creating spaces in terms of square or cubic meters. The use of materials offers a designer the potential to create atmospheres and offer a greater palette of techniques and possibilities than the creation of volumes and spaces.

Concrete is a material that contains inherent characteristics setting it aside from other materials. It can be monolithically shaped in almost every form. It has a 'sensible' mass that can be felt by just standing beside an object. It offers an almost endless variety in terms of textures and tactility. All these appearances support the intended functionality with experiences of security, sacrality, awe, comfort, and so on.

If for instance one visits the Bruder Klaus Chapel by Peter Zumthor, or the Neues Museum by David Chipperfield, one feels the mass, experiences the heaviness, in such a way that it directly supports the purpose of the buildings themselves. Similarly the filigree façade on the MuCEM in Marseille by Rudy Ricciotti or the extreme thin shells by Heinz Isler support the structures through their sheer sense of lightness. There are bridges and infrastructures that through the form and dimensions of their concrete structures immediately makes their functionality clear and understood. Similarly, one can find examples of both interiors and exteriors, buildings, and public spaces that through the specific use of their material, convey and support their functionality as well as the architectural ambitions.

PRESENCE can be interpreted as how an object, a building, a bridge, a piece of furniture is perceived and experienced. How its material use supports its functional purpose. It can also be interpreted as a call to properly work with already existing structures. The ones that are already present, acknowledged heritage as much as those with hidden potential for reuse.

PRESENCE shows and informs the existence of an object. It escapes from interpretations as good or bad, beautiful, or ugly. When an object has presence, it simply is. There is no need to question why it is as it is. It is clear and understood. Timeless. Durable.



www.concretedesigncompetition.com

ASSIGNMENT

The 11th Concrete Design Competition on PRESENCE asks students of architecture, design, and engineering to explore and exploit the potential of concrete's properties with respect to any notion of PRESENCE. These can be related to inherent material properties, its production process, and to concrete's application in new or existing structures. They may address aesthetic desires, structural systems or fabrication methods and comment on economic realities, sustainability demands or social issues. It can also be interpreted as a call to properly work with already existing structures. The ones that are already present, acknowledged heritage as much as those with hidden potential for reuse.

This competition asks for a wide range of ideas on how to use concrete. It does not prescribe a specific location or program; participants can choose a context of their own that supports their fascinations and ambitions and that fits an acute presentation of their ideas. Proposals may range from objects, furniture and architectural details to housing, landscape interventions, complex buildings, infrastructure, and structural systems.

Competition entries need to address technical and functional aspects as well as formal and programmatic ones – the ideas need to be tested through design proposals to convincingly demonstrate their potential. They will be reviewed on the combination of inventiveness in addressing the competition's theme and architectural implications. Proposals should be clear on how concrete is deployed, as well as on why this is appropriate and beneficial.

The 11th Concrete Design Competition – PRESENCE runs in five European countries during the academic years 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024. National laureates will be invited to participate in a weeklong international workshop facilitated by the industry's expertise featuring renowned lecturers and critics, further exploring reimagining concrete.