

# International Biennial of Landscape Architecture of Barcelona. A COVID-19 adapted 11<sup>th</sup> Edition

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After the rescheduling due to the global pandemics, the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Biennial of Landscape Architecture of Barcelona took place the last week of September 2021 in its first virtual edition. The event had been delayed by one year to preserve the conviviality of life events in the extraordinary setting of the venue in the Palau de la Música Arc Deco building. Nevertheless, the fifth wave hit Spain forced the organisation team to morph the Biennial into a new format to adapt to the online world.

The 11th International Biennial of Landscape Architecture of Barcelona was organised by the Association of Architects of Catalonia (COAC) and the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC Barcelona Tech) and had the institutional support of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). On the backstage of the event, the team of curators of the Biennial challenged the previous two full-day structures to pursue a new product for a new digital audience built on the know-how of the past Biennials. All the aforementioned entities supported this metamorphosis and agreed to embrace an online free event to raise the profession's profile and share a global virtual meeting point.

The objective was to concentrate in one week a series of lectures, streamed live that would bring together colleagues from around the globe for two or

three hours, to listen and share thoughts around a symposium targeting the latest and best achievements in Landscape Architecture. Therefore, the traction of the call for the two prizes (professional and academics) hosted by the Biennial that had been launched before the pandemics was vital.

On the one hand, the Biennale symposium had always been the meeting point and dissemination hall for the finalists to the Rosa Barba Prize, the professional award. The call for the 11th edition of the Prize had gathered an incredible selection of projects, cast in 2020 by an international team of prestigious jurors such as Esteban Leon (head of the program for the elaboration of resilience profiles of the UN-Habitat cities); Cristina Castelbranco (landscape architect and doctor in History of Art of Gardens at the University of Lisbon); *James Hayter* (landscape architect and urban planner from Harvard University), Julie Bargmann (the architect behind regenerative and collaborative landscapes) and Kongjian Yu (landscape architect, urban planner with a PhD from Harvard University) and President to the Jury. The eleven finalists of the Rosa Barba International Landscape Prize for this edition have been:

- *Medellín River Parks* (Colombia), by Sebastian Monsalve Gomez + Juan David Hoyos Taborda

- *Transformation of Yang Shupe Thermal Power Plant*, Shanghai (China), by Original Design Studio/TJAD
- *Ribeirinho Oriente Park*, Lisboa (Portugal), by F|C - Arquitectura Paisagista
- *Schelde Quays in South Sint-Andries* (Belgium), by PROAP - Estudos e Projectos de Arquitectura Paisagista Lda
- *International Geodesign collaboration*, London (UK), by Carl Steinitz for IGC core group and the current 140 university participants.
- *Brooklyn Bridge Park*, New York (USA), by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. - Landscape Architect
- *Chulalongkorn University Centenary Park* (Thailand), by LANDPROCESS
- *Girona's Shores* (Spain), de EMF- Estudi Martí Franch
- *La Mexicana Park* (Mexico), by Grupo de Diseño Urbano (GDU) + Victor Márquez (VMA)
- *Central Park*, Valencia (Spain), by Gustafson Porter + Bowman
- *The tropics and the built landscape Urban Center of Medellin Colombia*, by AEU

The Rosa Barba International Landscape Prize is one of the greatest honours landscape projects can receive, for its international prestige and significant economic reward of 15,000 €. It has been awarded biannually since 2001 by independent juries composed ad hoc in each edition and is promoted by the non-for-profit organisation as the Biennial is. The purpose is to recognise the best practices in the profession by showcasing landscape architecture projects built five years before the symposium date that are setting new trends, methodologies or robust professional approaches.

On the other hand, beyond the finalists' time to present their Rosa Barba project, the symposium has always had reflected on the profession through a tagline.

A title or tagline is launched bi-annually as an intellectual guide of the edition. On this occasion, it was phrased as *Climate change, again: City and Nature*. Accordingly, eight experts were invited to articulate how the profession should shift towards a new paradigm to conciliate nature in the urban environments to mitigate and adapt to the New Climate Regime at all scales, from global to European to a more local scope and intervention. The global trends were anticipated by Martha Schwartz (Landscape architect, urban planner, climate activist and professor at Harvard University Graduate School of Design), Colleen Mercer Clarke (Landscape architect and coastal ecologist), Li Xiong (Professor and Vice President of Beijing Forestry University) and Gilles Clément (gardener and professor at the National Superior School of the Country of Versailles). The European scale was covered by Karin Helms (President of IFLA Europe and professor at the Oslo School of Architecture) and Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons (Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe). In contrast, the regional scale was introduced by Xavier Matilla (Chief Architect of the Barcelona City Council) and Ramon Torra (Architect and manager of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona).

In parallel to the Rosa Barba Prize, the Biennale organises an academic prize. Since 2003, we have launched a call to universities worldwide educating our future professionals and required them to send the five best projects of their most mature students. The International Prize of the Landscape Architecture Schools and Universities is endowed with 1.500 € by Fundació Banc de Sabadell and enables a student from the winning University to come to Barcelona, and you're the local Master Program in Landscape Architecture. Beyond the eight lecturers of the theoretical day framed by the motto and the eleven finalists to the Prize, another set of lecturers was included taking advantage of the online format. An international jury is biannually invited to visit the ma-

terials sent by each school, five projects from each school from around ninety international schools. This year's edition of the Prize had the privilege to be constituted by Tim Baird (Chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Cornell University), Brigitte Colin (UNESCO programme specialist in charge of intersectoral urban projects), Lisa Mackenzie (Senior Lecturer in The Edinburgh School of Architecture), Philippe Poullaouec-Gonidec (Prize winner of Trudeau Research Foundation in Canada) and Félix Solaguren, (Director of the Barcelona School of Architecture, UPC). The jurors selected nine schools as finalists, and this fall, for the very first time, the school were invited to join the symposium by presenting their projects and educational methodologies (five students projects per school). The finalist universities schools for the *International Award for Landscape Schools - Bank Sabadell Foundation* were:

- Leibniz University Hannover (Germany).
- University of Technology Sydney (Australia).
- Harvard University Graduate School of Design (USA).
- City College of New York (USA).
- School of Architecture, Politecnico di Milano (Italy).
- Amsterdam Academy of Architecture (the Netherlands).
- TUDelft (the Netherlands).
- Huazhong University of Science and Technology (China).

The list of finalist schools for the 11<sup>th</sup> edition has been outstanding, with exciting and experimental projects reflecting on the pandemics and new forms of online teaching adapted during those times.

All in all, keeping in mind the overall objective to concentrate in one week a wide range of free, streamed life lectures, the event was successful to organise the finalists of the Rosa Barba Prize, the representatives of the University opting to the International

School Prize and the eight keynote lecturers from the theoretical day. The listed three blocks of content, ranging from professional to theoretical and academic profiles, immersed the audience into a broad-spectrum perception of the best practices of Landscape Architecture as a discipline championing for better practices and triggering sectoral dissemination. After four days following the lectures closely from keynotes and designers, the winners' reveal was served as the final event to the whole Biennial and closure. *The Brooklyn Bridge Park* in New York, designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh, won the Rosa Barba International Landscape Prize 2021 project, whilst the *Medellín River Parks*, by Sebastian Monsalve Gomez and Juan David Hoyos Taborda, has received a Mention from the Jury. *The City College of New York* won the main Prize, but the International Jury awarded two mentions for the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering Politecnico di Milano and the University of Technology Sydney. The announcement was made during the ceremony award of the 1<sup>st</sup> October, in a hybrid session streamed from the Palau de la Música accessible to share online<sup>1</sup>.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c3llfgHv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c3llfgHv4)> (12/21).