



Press Release
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FLEMISH MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND CULTURE
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Paul Vermeulen wins Flemish Culture Award for Architecture 2010-2011

Today, the Flemish Minister for Culture, Joke Schauvliege, presented the 2010-2011 Flemish Community Award for Architecture to the architect Paul Vermeulen. The laureate of the Culture Award receives a bronze statuette by Johan Tahon and a cash prize of 12,500 euros. Every other year the award goes to an architect, alternating with a Design Award. The award ceremony took place in the run-up to the fifth Architecture Day on Sunday 9 October at deSingel in Antwerp.

Paul Vermeulen has been a practising architect for almost thirty years, who also writes as well as being a critic who also builds. In so doing, he occupies a unique position, even in Europe. His career is founded on a strong personal commitment. In his work – both in his penmanship and in his architectural designs – he has succeeded in achieving that rare combination of sharp observation, a thorough analysis, and attention for his craft. In so doing he draws from a wide reference frame, including his love of literature. His articles on architecture are fed by a highly precise analysis of the tangible reality surrounding us, but also by the more invisible ideas, expectations and societal notions that underpin it.

Paul Vermeulen's critiques, which have been published in trade publications as well as in the general press, are often reminiscent of letters. Their direct nature and limpid style contribute to making the architectural discourse more accessible, to a wider audience. He once explained that his choice of architecture was fuelled by "a naive enthusiasm for the streets and buildings of my native city". And time and again, he has succeeded in infecting his readers with this naive enthusiasm.

The jury motivated its decision as follows: "Attention for architecture has increased significantly in Flanders. But all too often the emphasis is placed on the spectacular or novel aspect. Writings which succeed in involving their readers in the complicated considerations that underpin the design of buildings are the exception rather than the rule. Paul Vermeulen always keeps the longer term of architecture in mind, even when writing about the here and now." Because the architectural debate in Flanders urgently needs more impassioned and expert critics like him, the jury wishes to provide Paul Vermeulen's quiet and authentic voice with a broader platform, thus encouraging others to follow in his footsteps.

Flemish Minister Joke Schauvliege: "Architecture does not always have to cause a commotion. It can also be experienced in silence and defined in all its purity. This laureate takes a carefully considered and sensitive approach to his work, and much to my satisfaction, he also focuses on sustainability."

The Flemish Architecture Institute (Vlaams Architectuurinstituut, VAI) organised the fifth Architecture Day on Sunday 9 October, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Three overarching themes, 'sustainability', 'participation' and 'the building of group housing' capitalise on present-day spatial and ecological issues. Over 75 buildings were exceptionally open, with guided visits, lectures, debates and exhibitions on the

program across Flanders. Architects, principals and expert guides expounded on the story underpinning the design of some of the more noteworthy construction projects of recent years.

During the award ceremony of the Culture Award for Architecture, VAI Director, Christoph Grafe also introduced the pamphlet 'Dierbaar is duurzaam', in which he argued in favour of a social-cultural approach to the concept of 'sustainability'. The pamphlet first and foremost emphasised the need for a new approach to architecture, culture and ecology. It aims to bring about a change in mentality, which focuses less on the material-technical aspect of sustainability, preferring a more 'social sustainability' instead, which is founded on spatial quality.

More information at www.dagvandearchitectuur and www.vai.be

'New Style' Culture Awards

As of season 2010-2011, 'new style' Flemish Culture Awards will be granted. This new style was introduced following an evaluation carried out in collaboration with a number of sectoral support centres. A jury of experts pays tribute to individuals or organisations that in the course of the past season made a notable contribution to cultural life in Flanders. The laureate of the Culture Award is celebrated at an event specific to the sector involved. In this way both the sector and the winner will receive more attention and appreciation.

This award carries the amount of 12,500 euros. For the General Cultural Merit Award an amount of 20,000 euros is earmarked by the Government of Flanders. Each laureate also receives a bronze statuette by artist Johan Tahon.

More information at: www.cultuurprijzen.be and www.vlaanderen.be/cultuur.