



"VANISHED CASTLE " IN THE HEART OF STROPKOV

(Stropkov - Slovakia) — Prague, Czech Republic 26.03.2025

The town castle, now classified as a "vanished castle", and an important national cultural monument, will undergo extensive revitalization that will transform it into an attractive and accessible space for the public. The project's goal is not only the restoration of the original foundation and presentation of the castle but also the harmonious integration of historical structures with modern architectural elements that emphasize its character and significance.

"Revitalizing the historical space in Stropkov requires a sensitive approach, connecting the past with the present. Our project presents the "vanished castle" in its torso-like form while simultaneously creating a 'green island' in the middle of the city—a multifunctional public space that combines sustainability, social value, and historical legacy. The covering structures made of pigmented concrete act as sculptural elements within the space, protecting archaeological finds and clearly delineating the difference between old and new," — describes the chief architect of the project and founder of the S+ studio,

Ing. arch. Nikoleta Slovákova.

S+ Architectural Studio is currently preparing project documentation focused on both the restoration and presentation of the castle in Stropkov. The proposal embodies an architectural, artistic, and innovative approach to the revitalization of historical sites.

"Our long-term goal is to comprehensively revitalize the spacious central square. Thanks to the architectural competition, this project has now reached its final phase. Our square is uniquely characterized by the inclusion of remnants of the town castle, along with the church and manor. Archaeological and historical research has provided the foundation for integrating the complex of the "vanished castle" into the spatial structure of the central public space, which had been awaiting overall revitalization for years. The current stage is the culmination of a time-consuming effort to renew the square. This phase was preceded by processes of purchasing and demolishing buildings standing on the square, directly above the town fortifications. Nonetheless, the architectural competition has made a significant step toward reconstructing the remaining part of Stropkov's historic center. There is still much work to be done, but our goal for this term of office is to begin the construction,"

— adds **JUDr. Ondrej Brendza**, the town mayor.

The estimated date for completion of the documentation and the start of the first phase of the project is estimated for the beginning of 2026.

1. Torso-like presentation of the historical remains of the castle (Stropkov Castle – vanished historical landmark)

Stropkov Castle, today classified as a “vanished castle” and a national cultural monument, formed a significant part of the town's fortifications. The first documented mention of its existence dates back to **1408** when it was referred to as *Castellum Thoporo*. The castle underwent several renovations, with extensive fortifications added in the **16th and 17th centuries**, including corner bastions and connections to the parish church. Archaeological research has revealed its original trapezoidal layout, with dimensions of approximately **120×70 meters**.

In the 19th century, the castle was significantly damaged by fire and gradually dismantled, with its remnants preserved mainly in the form of today's church, manor, and archaeological finds below ground level. The town of Stropkov has long been striving to restore the castle and integrate it with the surrounding square area. The architectural competition was preceded by the settlement of property rights and the demolition of houses built on the archaeological site.

2. Covering new constructions as a protective element and dialogue between historical remains and new forms

The revitalization project for the town castle in Stropkov focuses on connecting historical archaeological finds with modern architecture and sustainable solutions within urban planning. A key aspect of the project is the torso-like presentation of the “vanished town castle”, where the floor plans of the perimeter walls and some of the castle's fragments will be preserved through conservation and protective over-masonry of row masonry. Modern interventions, such as covering structures and small-scale architecture in the form of benches, are clearly distinguished from the original elements, creating a visual contrast between the old and the new.

Covering structures serve both protective and aesthetic functions. For example, a modern construction on the northwestern bastion, featuring a green roof, protects archaeological finds and clearly distinguishes itself from the original historical parts of the castle. The use of pigmented concrete contributes to a harmonious visual connection with the square, which is currently paved in shades of burgundy.

3. Sustainability and sensitive approach to restoration

The design emphasizes ecological sustainability, with systems primarily distributing rainwater to trees. Water in the area will be naturally absorbed by unpaved surfaces, with wide joints in the paving allowing for this absorption. Excess rainwater will be collected in retention tanks and used to irrigate new green areas. Green roofs will contribute to improving the microclimate and ecological stability of the area.

4. Multifunctional, inclusive public space

The ‘Green Island’, as the architects call the design proposal, will transform into a multifunctional public space that creates a logical connection between significant historical points such as the Pieta Chapel, the parish church, the manor, and the archaeological area of the castle. New spaces will be flexibly adapted for organizing cultural, social, and spiritual events, while maintaining their visual and physical accessibility.

Stages of Work and the Approach to Revitalization

The project implementation will occur in phases. The first phase includes the presentation of historical finds and the creation of new architectural elements in the northern and eastern parts of the area. During the second phase, which will be carried out after thorough archaeological research, additional parts of the territory will be revitalized.

Experts in the fields of architecture, heritage protection, archaeology, and ecological solutions are participating in the project. The revitalization project for the square and castle in Stropkov is an example of how modern architecture can respect historical heritage while providing new functional options for the public.

The revitalization project for the castle complex in Stropkov is being carried out by the S+ collective architectural studio, under the leadership of architect Nikoleta Slovákova, who won an open architectural competition for the design solution of the site in 2023.

The jury unanimously agreed that the winning proposal best responded to the competition's requirements. *"[The proposal] Hides great potential and is flexible regarding further modifications according to the client's requirements. It respects current sustainability demands for water capture in the area. Despite its scope, the proposal does not dominate but creates a 'pedestal' for the existing historical objects. The Green Island in the middle of the square is a pleasant counterpoint to its harsh and open northern part. The proposal represents a strong idea of an island - an urban landscape that gradually 'dissolves' into the existing square,"* — explains the competition jury chairman, **Matej Grébert**.

Authorship:

Architectural Office: S+ (S+collective s.r.o.)

Design Authors: Nikoleta Slovákova, Jan Sulzer, Rudolf Nikerle, Laura Lukáčová, Kryštof Jireš

Collaboration: i2f s.r.o. - Peter Tegza, Silvia Morkišová, Procing s.r.o. - Juraj Rohár

Visualizations: Portraits of projects

Project Year: 2023 - present

Location: Stropkov, Slovakia



Nikoleta Slováková is a Slovak architect who brings into her work distinctive forms, contrasting approaches, and rich professional experience. She founded Studio S+ in 2023 as a platform for creative architecture that combines boldness, innovative thinking, and a focus on architectural viability. The studio emphasizes contemporary relevance, attention to detail, contextual awareness, and the transformative potential of spaces.

Each project at S+ is the result of collaborative teamwork that evolves from initial design to final realization. The team, denoted by the plus sign (+), includes a broad spectrum of experts who contribute to the detailed documentation and the architectural expression of the projects.

Nikoleta Slováková developed her skills at the prestigious Prague studio Petr Hájek ARCHITEKTI, participating in numerous projects that challenged the conventions of contemporary architecture. Along with other team members, she received the Main Prize of the Czech Architecture Award 2024 for the Concert Hall of the Imperial Baths project in Karlovy Vary, to which she significantly contributed.

At the turn of 2022-2023, she also collaborated with Apropos Architects studio and architect Tereza Šváchová, leading to successes in several public competitions. Key projects of these collaborations include designs for the residential building 'Za Papírnou' in Prague 7, and the newly realized Czech Pavilion for EXPO 2025 in Osaka, Japan.

In her academic pursuits, she focuses on integrating transportation with other architectural functions. She completed her engineering degree with a thesis titled 'City on the Track,' which was nominated for the international Young Talent Architecture Award at the Faculty of Architecture at the Czech Technical University in Prague.