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Nobel Quran Oasis

Gerber Architekten win competition in Madinah

The winners of the invited international competition for the „Nobel Quran Oasis“ have been announced in Madinah. Gerber Architekten convinced the jury with their landscape focused design and share the second prize with Ricardo Bofill-Taller de Arquitectura. A first prize was not awarded and the third prize was given to gmp. Zaha Hadid and Arata Isozaki & Associates both received a commendation.

The new museum for the Quran, located in the holy city of Al Madinah al Munawarah, makes a contrast to the barren volcanic landscape with its verdant centre – like a modern oasis. Embedded in a Wadi, the design exploits the topography of this dried-up stream and allows it to be re-experienced as a newly-formed oasis. The roof of the „Nobel Quran Oasis“ will be constructed as a three dimensional sculpture of simple geometric figures reminiscent of traditional Islamic ornamentation and will be entirely covered with gold photovoltaic elements. The landscape design refers to the classical gardens of the Arab world and illustrates central elements of Quran teaching.

Madinah al-Munawarah, also known as the radiant city, is after Makkah the most important city for pilgrims of the Islamic faith. The site of around 200,000 m² intended for the „Nobel Quran Oasis“ is located to the north-east of the city centre, about 12 km from the Prophet’s mosque and in the immediate vicinity of the Prince Muhammad ibn Abdul Aziz airport. The surrounding area consists of a volcanic landscape and the dried up Wadi. Using this topography as a starting point, Gerber Architekten have developed a verdant cultural oasis at its centre.

The shape of the building is derived from traditional Islamic ornamentation. Simple geometric figures are combined in concentric rings to create a sculptural unity.

The museum will be accessed via two terraced entrance areas at each end of the former Wadi. The visitor enters the underground central plaza, a foyer which extends over all levels as an atrium, receiving natural daylight through the perforated roof.

The heart of the building will be the exhibition space in the first floor. It is based on five cores, the five pillars of islam (Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm und Hajj). The column-free exhibition spaces are organized into three interactive routes, which interpret the history of Islamic culture and the Quran. The dramatic golden roof landscape produces a variety of lighting atmospheres inside the exhibition areas. Direct, indirect and filtered light is precisely deployed and the atmosphere is intensified by changing ceiling heights.

A conference centre for trade fairs, a library, an auditorium, seminary rooms, a mediatheque and educational area are placed on two levels around the plaza. Patio courtyards with different themes are placed between the different areas, to function not only as botanical gardens but also to inform the different target groups of visitors about plants in Quran teaching.

The building has a total area of 100,000m² GFA and the building costs are estimated to be \$175 million US.

The Nobel Quran Oasis is envisioned as a unique place, sensitively inserted into the landscape but also visible from a distance as a typographic icon.

Further information:

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