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7th edition of the French prize for architecture with natural stone 2023: from building with small blocks to dry stone walls, the entire spectrum of solid construction was explored (26.02.2024, USA)



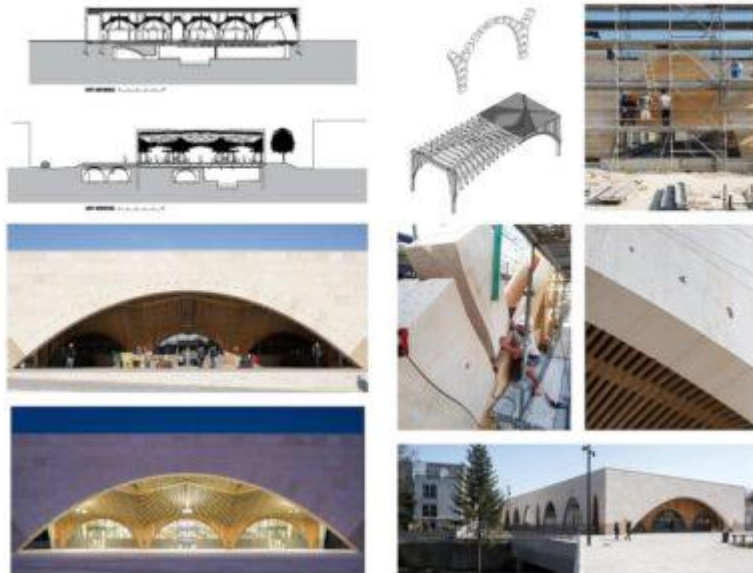
France's natural stone prize with the programmatic title "Construire en Pierre Naturelle au XXIe Siècle" (Building with Natural Stone in the 21st Century) is awarded every two years at the Rocalia trade fair in Lyon. At the 7th edition in 2023, all winners were dedicated to solid construction with stone.

This type of construction survived in a market niche in France after the Second World War. Key names of architects in these decades were Fernand Pouillon and Gilles Perraudin. Recently, in times of the ecological footprint in construction, the material has experienced a renaissance. We list some of its special features:

- * Solid buildings with stone have an exceptionally good balance in grey energy, because stone is simply there by nature. Extraction in the quarry and processing in the factory with modern technology requires little energy;
- * walls made of solid stone ashlar, due to their inertia, act as thermal stores; that is, they store the coolness of the night and protect against the heat of the day;
- * a façade of natural stone blocks is decorative even without plastering and can be easily cleaned over an expected lifetime of 50 years;
- * if a solid stone building is demolished, the stone ashlar can be reused.

Note: Natural stone as a building material can only really show its positive carbon footprint if it is sourced from quarries no more than 100 km away. Then such a building also fits harmoniously into the image of a town or village.

Below are the winners of the 7th competition. Prizes are awarded to recent building projects from France in which natural stone has been used in a striking or pioneering way. The competition is organized by the SNROC association and the trade magazine Pierre Actual and supervised by Michel Goutal. He is a senior architect at the country's heritage authority.



Grand Jury Prize:

Covered market in Saint-Dizier: like all towns, Saint Dizier is fighting the battle against greenfield shopping centers and internet commerce. The aim is to make the center attractive again for the citizens. The covered market, planned by the architects' collective Studiolada, attempts to do this in several ways: the building fits seamlessly into the historic core of the town and achieves this by using traditional building forms and building stone from the region. We will be presenting the project in detail soon.

Client: Municipality of Saint Dizier

Architects: Christophe Aubertin and Aurélie Husson from Collectif Studiolada

Stone work: SNBR, Rocamat, Polycor France

Stone: Pierre d'Euville limestone



Building in the landscape category:

“Observatoire de la Résilience” (Observatory of Resilience) is the name of this unadorned building on a hill in the Gorges du Gardon biosphere reserve. The river Gardon has carved picturesque gorges into the mountainous landscape and the building is intended to be an example of the possible co-existence of man and nature: it is made entirely of dry stone walls in which animals and plants find a habitat, just like in the surrounding scrubland. There is a panoramic view from the upper floor. Information on the history of the site is displayed on the walls of the stairwell.

Client: Syndicat Mixte des Gorges du Gardon
Architects: Replica Architecture
Stone company: Marcopiedra
Stone: Limestone from the Antiquailles quarry



Urban planning category:

The municipality of Saint-Didier-au-Mont-d'Or urgently needed parking spaces in the town center and was prepared to sacrifice a garden area hidden behind a wall for this purpose. Architect Elisabeth Polzella found a solution („Parking Paysage“ – Parking Landscape) that provided the town with both a parking area with 86 parking spaces and a public park. Part of the parking lot is underground and under a hanging garden. The old wall was dismantled and rebuilt with local limestone blocks as the wall of the parking area. Benches from the old garden were refurbished and reinstalled in the new park. The park has the potential to develop into something completely different in a time without cars.

Client: Ville de Saint-Didier-au-Mont-d'Or

Architect: Elisabeth Polzella architecte

Stone work: Carrières de Provence, Coquaz et Béal, Truffy Maçonnerie

Stone: Pierre de Vers-Pont-du-Gard and Pierre de Beaunotte limestones



Utility building category:

The new school center La Romaine de Vers-Pont-Du-Gard (30) is located on the site of a former quarry. What could be more obvious than to construct the building from this material? A government grant made this financially possible. Almost the entire building complex was constructed from the same limestone as parts of the famous Pont-du-Gard. The Lego-style construction is very illustrative for the children: they understand how their school building was built and also know what kind of material it is. The former quarry halls next door are used as storage for the community.

Client: Town of Vers-Pont-du-Gard

Architects: Teissier portal Architectes

Stone companies: Carrières de Provence, Chazelle

Stone: Pierre de Vers-Pont-Du-Gard limestone

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Residential building category:

The Peiro residential buildings are located at the entrance to the town of Gignac-la-Nerthe. They have eight units of social housing and connect them to the town center by being built from the same limestone. Other materials are concrete and wood. The structures in the façades, which were assembled by crane from 32 cm thick blocks of stone, are striking. Channels were milled out of the stone blocks for supply lines. The resulting columns were used again in the façade, where they were used to create windows for air circulation (mashrabiya).

Client: 3F Sud

Architects: Atelier Régis Roudil Architectes

Stone companies: Provençale PMG, Proroch

Stone: Pierre de Vers-Pont-du-Gard limestone



Special Jury Prize:

Alain Mimoun d'Issy-les-Moulineaux sports complex. The project is located at the interface of two urban units: the fortress, which dominates the site due to its elevated position with its tall buildings, and a dense suburb. The stone is reminiscent of the underground quarries that were operated here in the 19th century.

Client: Ville d'Issy-les-Moulineaux

Architects: Artibal Agence d'Architecture

Stone companies: Rocamat, Polycor France

Stone: Kalkstein Pierre de Massangis, Pierre de Tervoux