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## UTILITY, STRENGTH, BEAUTY – CRITERIA ADOPTED BY IBA FÜRST-PÜCKLER-LAND

## UŻYTECZNOŚĆ, TRWAŁOŚĆ, PIĘKNO – KRYTERIA PRZYJĘTE PRZEZ IBA FÜRST-PÜCKLER-LAND

W swoim pełnym tytule Międzynarodowa Wystawa Budownictwa w Łużycach specjalnie cytuje księcia Pücklera, który poprzez swoje parki w Bad Muskau i Cottbus/Branitz pokazywał, jak stworzone przez człowieka krajobrazy mogą być rzeczą piękną. Przy podejmowaniu zadania powtórnego rozwoju krajobrazu pokopalnianego, IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land pamiętało o tym, iż przywrócenie krajobrazu jest dyktowane tylko przez niemieckie ustawy i regulacje dotyczące kopalnictwa, gdzie głównymi kryteriami są użyteczność i trwałość. Niestety, piękno jest zwykle traktowane w Niemczech jako luksus, nie jako równoprawny filar triady witruwiańskiej. IBA jest zainteresowana przywróceniem równowagi.

*Słowa kluczowe: piękno, IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land*

In its full title the International Building Exhibition in Lusatia quite deliberately cites Prince Pückler, who demonstrated through his parks in Bad Muskau and Cottbus/Branitz how man-made landscapes can be a thing of beauty. In taking on the task of redeveloping a post-mining landscape, the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land was mindful that the re-emergence of this landscape would otherwise have been dictated only by the German mining statutes and regulations where the main criteria are utility and strength. Unfortunately, beauty is usually considered a luxury in Germany and not as an equal pillar in the Vitruvian triad. The IBA is keen to redress the balance.

*Keywords: beauty, IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land*

The most popular synopsis of the theory of Vitruvius is summed up in Germany as “utility, strength and beauty”. These criteria were juxtaposed by Vitruvius as having equal worth and form a trinity which only together can be an expression of good architecture. The same applies to the quality of landscape architecture.

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Let us take a few examples: Firstly, the bio-towers in Lauchhammer.

Originally built as a water purification system for a large-scale coking plant, their **utility** expired after German reunification when the coking plant was taken out of use and demolished. The broken tips and the cracks between the staircase and the body of the tower also gave rise to doubts as to the structure's **strength**. One entirely controversial point, however, was the remaining **beauty** and uniqueness of the group of buildings. Architects, landscape architects and town planners waxed lyrical while the local people were more likely to remember the stench which used to come from this wastewater treatment plant.

The IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land fought to preserve, repair and redevelop this important legacy of the industrial past and to find a new use for the buildings with their imposing beauty. In the end the IBA did find a way and the means, with various partners, to preserve and redevelop the bio-towers, adding two viewing turrets and finding new ways of using the buildings for tours and events. The impressive figure has now created a new triad of **utility, strength and beauty**.

The second example is the "Lusatian Lakeland landmark".

The IBA wanted to have a landmark which would serve a dual function as both a viewing tower and a symbol of the heart of the Lusatian Lakeland linked by navigable waterways. It was to express the distinctiveness of the Lusatian Lakeland, emphasising that

its origins lie in the lignite mining industry and the fact that it is now being shaped by human hands to become a waterscape uniquely characterised by its canal network and floating architecture.

The IBA joined forces with Senftenberg town council to run a Europe-wide competition and opted for a 30-metre high tower made of oxidised Corten steel with a triangular footprint and a stairway designed as a modern sculpture.

Those who climb the 30-metre tower are rewarded with a good view of three lakes which are linked by navigable waterways and accentuate the quality of this artificial lakeland scenery. The aspect of **utility** was thus guaranteed. The building inspectorate took care of the **strength** with their structural loading and soil mechanics survey. But what about the aspect of **beauty**? The rusty material, which forms a link with the industrial past of this landscape in the IBA's view, was regarded by many local people as ugly, if anything, and the sculptured stairway – modern in our eyes and therefore a bridge to the future – was paid precious little attention. And just because of this, the tower would also be twice as expensive as normal viewing towers?

Thankfully we were undeterred and went on to use the design proposed by the winner of the competition. The "rusty tower", as the locals call it, developed an enormous magnetism immediately after its official opening in the autumn of 2008 and is one of the highlights in the lakeland. Before long it was being written about and acclaimed in German, Italian, French and Dutch architectural journals and, in retrospect, the expense of its special design has been justified as it is precisely this which gives the tower its exceptional utility.

The third example is the design for a town harbour in Senftenberg.

Normally the lake comes first and then the settlement – maybe a village or town. With mine lakes

Biotürme\_Trio: Ruhl / Glanz

Landmarke\_Quatro: Hecht / Giers / Greger

Stadthafen\_Trio: Stadt Senftenberg / bgmr – Astoc – Ecosystem Saxonia



it is the other way round, however, which is why a town like Senftenberg has no link from the town centre to the lake and no attractive walkway leading to the water. As the largest town in the 7,000-hectare network of lakes (10 lakes are linked to each other by 13 navigable canals), Senftenberg has assumed a key role in the Lusatian Lakeland. The harbour will also give the former lignite mining town a face-lift and a new image as a lakeside town.

The idea is to create an attractive walkway from the town to the lake and an attractive gateway to the town from the water. Just think of all the films and pictures which convey the romance of a harbour setting and atmosphere.

Nevertheless it was difficult to convince the town councillors that it was a good idea to run a competition for the best architectural harbour design. The **utility** was seen in the number of landings and moorings at the harbour and the **strength** in its suitably robust construction. But the idea that their harbour might have something to do with **beauty**, with showcasing their town, with a flagship feature pointing the way from the town to the lake and from the lake to the town, and the idea of creating a purpose-built location and lifestyle resort were difficult concepts to put

across to people whose mindset was formed in, and shaped by, the lignite mining era.

Fortunately a narrow majority voted in favour of project, and the result of the Europe-wide competition has proved our point that it is only in the unity of **utility**, **strength** and **beauty** that real benefit can be achieved for a town on the lake where a harbour forms the most important link between these two elements.

Having set out these three examples, I would like to invite you to the presentation of our 10-year assignment and the work we have done to transform a lignite mining area into a lakeland. The IBA's grand finale will be celebrated from April to October 2010. The International Building Exhibition will be presenting its 30 projects, which were distributed over an area measuring 100 x 80 km, and will also be putting on a central exhibition on the IBA Terraces in Großräschen and producing a catalogue featuring the projects and the entire IBA process.

You can book special tours to selected IBA projects and we invite you to seven art events at special IBA venues.

Do not miss this special opportunity to be part of our IBA finale! Visit each project and look for the perfect triad of **utility**, **strength** and **beauty**!