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First cycle of the Holcim Awards

Markus Akermann and Rolf Soiron

The Holcim Foundation aspires to stimulate widespread awareness of the importance of sustainability in the construction industry. To accomplish this objective, the Holcim Awards were established to honor innovative work in fields pertaining to the built environment. The competition intends to foster experimental modes of practice that accelerate momentum toward a more equitable human condition worldwide. Awards are an effective way to encourage and inspire achievements that go beyond convention.

The competition was organized in two successive phases. The first phase started in 2004 and was held in the five geographic regions Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa Middle East and Asia Pacific. The second phase

was global in scope. Regardless of scale, projects at an advanced stage of design but not yet under construction were eligible for submission. Entries had to demonstrate proof of sustainability according to five target issues defined by the Holcim Foundation and its partner universities. These criteria address the need for a quantum leap in ecological, economic, social, and aesthetic performance.

At the regional level, more than 3,000 projects from 120 countries were submitted and subsequently reviewed by independent juries. In ceremonies held between September and October 2005, 46 teams were merited with prizes totaling 1.1 million US dollars. Following this round of the competition, the three top winning teams of

each region automatically qualified for the global Holcim Awards. In April 2006 prizes amounting to an additional 1 million US dollars were awarded in a ceremony held in Bangkok, Thailand.

This publication documents this process. It is conceived as an atlas providing a snapshot of the current state of sustainable construction worldwide. The focus of the book is on professional practice, offering a platform for translating ideas and methods of sustainability into applicable propositions. Thus, the atlas is understood to be both a survey that maps actual trajectories in practice, and a tool to access know-how in the field of construction. Statements by invited authors from various disciplines and representing different perspectives enrich the debate

on what constitutes sustainability for the built environment.

Based on the success of this initial competition, a second cycle of the Holcim Awards is envisioned to commence in June 2007. Again, the ambition is to promote future-oriented strategies in architecture, engineering, urban design, and policy-making that implement new aptitudes for sustainability, and are inspired by a mandate for innovation beyond purely technical solutions. To shape an ethic for a sustainable world, now and in the future, is precisely what is at stake.