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## INTERVIEW

## DR. JANA REVEDIN

Since 2006, the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture™, created by architect and researcher Jana Revedin, has been honoring the work of five international architects. Their common ground? They all commit to the path of sustainability, seeking contemporary architecture that is rational and environmentally responsible, in line with today's ethical, environmental, and social concerns.

Pioneering since its inception and still at the forefront today, the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture™ has revealed more than one visionary profile. The work conducted by Jana Revedin to highlight architects whose reflections are forward-thinking and concerned with the challenges related to human impact on the environment is essential.



Dr. Jana Revedin

### Why did you create the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture?

**JR:** In 2004 I was appointed curator of the very first European Student Competition on Sustainable Architecture gau:di (Governance of Architecture and Urbanism: a Democratic Interaction) launched by the European Commission, a part of the EU Culture 2000 program. I had presented my curatorial idea to the scientific Jury in Brussels: I would not launch an open competition for singular students, who would need to respond without the assistance of their teachers, but instead create a network of the leading ten European universities in Sustainable Development. Let us remember that back in 2004 the concept of "Sustainability" (the German forestry concept of Nachhaltigkeit, enounced in 1712: "Don't cut more trees than can regrow in the same time") was not yet translated into other European languages... The Jury said: "A great idea, but you'll never find ten universities to participate. They have no funding, no time, no precise knowledge." I asked for three months of time, I travelled from Olou in Finland, the most Nordic European Architecture school, to the most southern one, Thessaloniki in Greece. At the end of my voyage I did not have the agreement of ten associate universities, but of twenty, covering the whole European continent. I launched my biennial competition on an urgent theme, "A Minimum House", as all European university towns suffer the lack of affordable student housing. In the first year, together with colleagues from my associated universities, we would select the ten best teams, in the second year we would elaborate a 1:1 project to be exhibited at the Venetian Biennale, choosing the most relevant project between the ten. All ten teams would help to build the prototype. The winner of the first competition round of 2006 was the "Pallethouse", an zero-energy pavilion built of recycled pallets, designed by two students from TU Vienna. The press response to this pavilion, exposed in the public realm at the entrance of the Biennale, was so overwhelming, that I decided: If I can create this impact for architecture students, why not for architect colleagues?

### How did you launch the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture in 2006?

**JR:** With a very similar concept. I called specialized universities from the gau:di network into my Scientific Jury. We would announce an urgent theme every year and call the global scene to participate with candidatures. We would honor a posture, a political, social, technical, artistic engagement, a lifelong learning process, not just a project. And most of all, as in the gau:di concept, that united ten teaching and student teams from many cultures, it never occurred to me to honor only one single architect every year...

### Why did you wish to have more than one winner?

**JR:** I never liked the Nobel Prize idea of "the best ... in the world", because the Sustainable ethics is various and transdisciplinary. It is unthinkable to speak of the "best sustainable architect worldwide". Hence, together with my Scientific Board we decided to honor five laureates every year, combining great pioneers, the "no-stars", with promising, but unknown talents, the "no names", and trying to finally cross the borders of the traditional "Pritzker-Regions" - North Amerika, Europe, Japan - and to cover all continents.

**Your Award has become a true Driver of Change. It is notable that throughout the last ten years, five architects who have received the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture have been honored with the Pritzker Prize: Wang Shu, the first Chinese Pritzker laureate (GA 2007, Pritzker 2012), Alejandro Aravena, the first Southern American Pritzker laureate (GA 2008, Pritzker 2016), Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi, the first Indian Pritzker laureate (GA 2007, Pritzker 2018), Anne Lacaton & Jean-Philippe Vassal, French laureates said to produce "poor" architecture (GA 2018, Pritzker 2021), and Diébédo Francis Kéré, the first African Pritzker laureate (GA 2009, Pritzker 2022).**

**JR:** Indeed, the paradigm change in architecture, urban and landscape design is achieved, there is no way back. The members of the Pritzker Jury, today in majority Global Award winners, have understood to prove to the academic and professional scene, that our planet is round and that the Global South is the most innovative and inspiring actor in our Experimental-, Design- and Research fields.

**How are the 5 winners of each edition selected?**

**JR:** We define architecture as an agent of empowerment, self-development, and civic rights. "Dare, transmit, federate" is our motto. Consequently, the submissions are democratic and transparent. Every architect, urban or landscape designer can propose his or her application, but can also propose one or more colleagues. Our expert network formed by scholars, critiques, theorists, journalists and of course the 85 Global Award winners covers the Globe. The challenging task of our scientific jury is to select an excellent and surprising cru every year, responding to the announced criteria.

**This year, the awards ceremony will take place in Venice. A new chapter in the development of the prize?**

**JR:** I had the chance to return home to my venetian Alma Mater, the Luav University, and to organize the Global Award Ceremony and Symposium during the opening days of the Venetian Biennale, when the whole world visits our beloved little town. In some way a circle closes with the gau:di competition, that took place for many Biennales here in Venice. I hope that, together with my well-chosen scientific and organization partners, we can enchant the global audience. The chosen theme for 2024 could not be more appropriate for the new chapter we are starting: "Architecture is Education". Nothing is more urgent today, than to think and do architecture otherwise, reshaping what is already there and offering dignified life conditions to every single living being.

**How did the UNESCO put your Award under its patronage in 2011?**

**JR:** This recognition confirmed the ethical and humanistic level of the Award itself, but also of the Community the laureates have created. In fact, since nearly twenty years now we experiment, we research, we write, we teach, we expose, we even build together. We support each other at an academic level, because the redefinition of the architect's civic and political role starts with its academic education – thus with the role models the students find inside their schools. Our global Community is truly working together, sometimes even in a militant way... To emphasize this and to give us even more visibility and radiance, the International Union of Architects (UIA), patron of all worldwide architecture chambers, will endorse the Global Award from this year onwards.

**Will the book about the five laureates of 2024, "Architecture is Education," be published in Venice?**

**JR:** Finally I have gained the long breath to make this possible. "Architecture is Education", edited by the renown scientific publisher ArchiTangle Berlin, will appear the same day of the Symposium, with brand new interviews of the laureates, contextual portraits and project descriptions written by the architecture critique Marie-Hélène Contal and a guest comment on today's necessary education by Jose Luis Uribe Ortiz, co-founder of the cutting-edge Talca School of Architecture in Southern Chile.

**Is it also an opportunity to present a second volume, "Architecture is Experimentation"?**

**JR:** As the 2023 Global Award Symposium, the last one to be organized in Paris, could only be held online because of a French national transport strike, we invited all the 2023 laureates to Venice, and they will finally receive their publication. You will meet Benedetta Tagliabue, Xu Tiantian, Mette Ramsgaard Thomsen, the RAAAF Brothers and Simon Teyssou, with their fresh book under their arms.