**ECOLA Conference 2015**

**The potential of plaster**

At the eighth European Conference of Leading Architects (ECOLA), 31 participants from 13 European countries discussed the current applications and future design possibilities of plaster. The highlight of the conference was the presentation of the ECOLA Awards for the most remarkable new buildings or refurbishments in Europe in recent years, “which are characterised, either entirely or in substantial parts, by the use of render/plaster on facades or in interiors”. This European-wide competition was organised by Sto SE & Co. KGaA together with the association of German plasterers (Bundesverband Ausbau und Fassade im Zentralverband des Deutschen Baugewerbes) for the eighth time. The five award winners in 2015, as well as all the members of the nomination and assessment juries, were invited to attend the conference.

On 24 September 2015, ECOLA began with a visit to the university city of Oxford, where Wilkinson Eyre Architects guided the participants through “Maggie’s Centre”, a day-care facility for people suffering from cancer and their relatives. Afterwards, the group visited other recently completed buildings such as St. Anthony’s College by Zaha Hadid. On the next day of the conference, the participants listened to the lecture “Cheerful Architecture – the real sustainer” by Sir Peter Cook and the keynote speech given by Professor Brian Cody, which followed the principle of “There can be no good architecture without a good energy concept”.

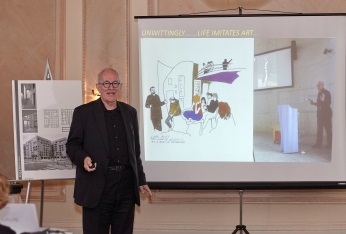
This was followed by a presentation of the projects that won the ECOLA Award. The 1st prize in the refurbishment/renovation/conversion category went to wespi de meuron romeo architekten from Scaiano, Switzerland, for the renovation of a stone house in the centre of their home village. In the new building category, the architects from spacialAR-TE, Porto rejoiced at the 1st prize, which they received for the High-Performance Rowing Centre in Pocinho, Portugal. Special mentions were awarded to Carlos Arroyo Architects (Madrid) for the “OostCampus” in Oostkamp, Belgium, Atelier Zafari (Berlin) for the “Housing at the old city wall” project in Berlin, and Éric Lapierre Architecture from Paris for their “86 Apartments” project in Lyon.

In the afternoon, all the participants designed their visions in plaster. In a breath-taking English garden landscape in Medmenham, Buckinghamshire, each architect drafted a “Statement in Plaster”. At teatime, Professor Enrique Sobejano (Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos, Madrid) gave an impressive lecture on the significance of plaster for his buildings. During the festive award ceremony in the former Bisham Abbey, Jochen Stotmeister, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of STO Management SE, and Jürgen G. Hilger, President of the European Union of Contractors for Plastering, Dry Lining, Stucco and Related Activities (UEEP), presented the ECOLA Awards 2015. On the last day of the conference, Sir Peter Cook took the architects on a very personal guided tour of London by boat and made them acquainted with the city from the River Thames. The conference ended with a visit to the Sto Werkstatt, a showroom in London’s Clerkenwell district, which currently features an exhibition by J. Mayer H. on the ECOLAs of recent years.



15-44-ECOLA\_02\_G

The first day of the conference began with a visit to Oxford and a guided tour of “Maggie's Centre” by Wilkinson Eyre Architects.



15-44-ECOLA\_07\_G

The lecture by Sir Peter Cook on “Cheerful Architecture – the real sustainer” opened the second day of the conference.



15-44-ECOLA\_08\_G

The second keynote speech of the day provided plenty of food for thought: “There can be no good architecture without a good energy concept” by Brian Cody.



15-44-ECOLA\_17\_G

Focused work on the “Statements in Plaster”. Here: Holger Kehne of Plasma Studio, London.



15-44-ECOLA\_28\_G

The host country for ECOLA 2015 impressed with picture-perfect weather.