

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today presented the Young Architect of the Year award, which was awarded to Villem Tomiste, at the general assembly of the Union of Estonian Architects.

"The Young Architect of the Year award is not just a means for acknowledging a young and talented Estonian architect. This serves as acknowledgment to all those newcomers who are shaping our living environment, as well as their teachers and predecessors. In a word, this is praise for good Estonian architecture and architectural education in Estonia," confirmed the President before presenting the Young Architect of the Year award to Villem Tomiste.

He thanked Estonian architects for their inquisitive and open minds, which are all around us in contemporary looks and images that help to open up the world for us and, likewise, us to the world.

"And this is how they have also contributed to expanding and opening our mindset," said the Head of State.

President Ilves also recalled Václav Havel who said that when he sees empty and littered gaps in an otherwise beautiful and expensive-looking heart of a city, he can be sure that he is in one of the post-Soviet states.

"Normal town spaces cannot be filled with totally inappropriate, empty gaps. For example, as I look at our capital city, Tallinn, I am extremely disturbed by the fact that the sea-facing side of the city is being cut off from the remaining town space. A city by the sea must be in constant dialogue with the sea," the Head of State said.

"When I speak of gaps in town spaces, I am not simply referring to the absence of buildings to match their surroundings or empty, cluttered squares in the downtown that are waiting for construction workers to find them. I also mean mental gaps, which emerge if only shopping centres, office buildings and hotels remain in the downtown," President Ilves said. "A town must be a multi-layered, living entity; only then will people recognise its real life and a town become interesting and inviting. Nobody wants to live in a bleak environment, both in an urban space

and mental sense. Therefore, we need cultural establishments and monuments to pep up urban spaces, in addition to shops and office buildings. This will give a town mental and spiritual spaces, instead of merely administrative boundaries."

The most well-known works of Villem Tomiste (36), who acquired his degree in the specialty of architecture at the Department of Architecture of the Estonian Academy of Arts, are the planning of the central square in Rakvere, apartment houses in Laagri – a suburb next to Tallinn; four town houses in the Rotermann quarter of the capital city and a town house in Aia Street, Tallinn Old Town. Apart from a regular architectural practice, he has, at his own initiative, envisaged alternative visions for the spire of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Tallinn, which was destroyed in a fire (2003) and for transforming the Viru traffic area in Tallinn into a pedestrian square (2004). Buildings that have been created by Ott Kadarik and Mihkel Tüür (Architectural Bureau KOSMOS OÜ) are characterised by an intriguing use of materials, playful forms and ultra modernist spatial division. Villem Tomiste has also successfully participated in numerous Estonian and international architectural competitions, and in 2008 he was awarded, as a member of the staff of Architectural Bureau KOSMOS OÜ, a national cultural award of the Republic of Estonia for the town houses in the Rotermann Quarter. In 2003, Villem Tomiste received the Urban Studies Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment.

The Young Architect of the Year award is an annual award established by the Union of Estonian Architects and funded with some support from co-operation partners Heldur Meerits and Go Travel Travel Agency; the purpose of the award is to boost innovative and creative thinking in young architects. The award includes a world tour to the value of 4,500 EUR. The acknowledgement is aimed at encouraging young architects to widen their horizons and become more innovative and diversified in their creative work and business.

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