RIBA Stirling Prize 2016 Winner: Newport Street Gallery

Friday 7 October, 2016

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Caruso St John's Newport Street Gallery wins 2016 RIBA Stirling Prize for the best building of the year. Newport Street Gallery has won the coveted 2016 RIBA Stirling Prize for the UK's best new building. Now in its 21st year, the RIBA Stirling Prize sponsored by Almacantar, is the UK's most prestigious architecture prize. This is the first time Caruso St John architects have won the RIBA Stirling Prize; they were shortlisted for the award for Brick House, west London in 2006 and New Art Gallery Walsall in 2000. Newport Street Gallery involved the conversion and transformation of a street facing a railway line in Vauxhall, south London, into a free public gallery for artist Damien Hirst's private art collection. Three listed Victorian industrial buildings, formerly carpentry and scenery painting workshops for West End theatres, have been remodelled and flanked at either end by entirely new buildings; one with a striking, spiky saw-tooth roof.

The new additions have a specially-created hard pale red brick finish to closely reference the original buildings, while a huge LED panel on the railway facade encourages passing train commuters to visit. The ground and upper floors within the interconnected five buildings are continuous, with new spiral staircases on their side, to create flexible spaces able to accommodate everything from individual works to larger shows.

Comments from the judges:

'This highly accomplished and expertly detailed art gallery is a bold and confident contribution to the best of UK architecture. Caruso St John's approach to conservation is irreverent yet sensitive and achieves a clever solution that expresses a poetic juxtaposition of old and new.

'The collection of buildings is beautifully curated, pulled together by the use of brick yet still expressive of their individuality. The playful use of LED technology gives a contemporary addition to the facade.

'Internally, the five buildings are connected as a continuous and coherent sequence of light filled gallery spaces. The simple and logical circulation is enlivened by exquisitely detailed and sensuous staircases.

'The gallery, which is free of charge, is a generous asset to an evolving community.'

Speaking tonight, RIBA President Jane Duncan said:

'With Newport Street Gallery, Damien Hirst has made an exceptional contribution to the UK's strong history of private patronage of architecture. Not only has Damien opened up his enviable private art collection to the world, but he has commissioned a real work of art to house it in.

'Caruso St John have created a stunningly versatile space from a number of linked buildings, with beautifully crafted staircases and superb details including tactile brick facades that blend the street externally and create a succession of wonderful gallery spaces.

'This project exemplifies the best of UK architecture – a highly considered and creative project that brings to life a previously-unloved pocket of the city. I am delighted to present architects Caruso St John with the 2016 RIBA Stirling Prize.'

Peter St John, Partner, Caruso St John Architects said:

'It's rare for architects to be given the opportunity to realise a personal vision of the quality of the Newport Street Gallery, and for that vision to have a generous public dimension. We see the building as a palace for direct, intimate and luxurious encounters with contemporary art, and we are very pleased that this award will bring more people to see this extraordinary collection.'.

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