Vertical Restructuring
High-rise tower rehabilitation, Nantes, France

Main author
Grégoire Arthuis, architect, Paris, France

Summary by the jury
The project revisits a high-rise building of the 1970s “Tour Bretagne” in the center of the city of Nantes, France. The tower suffers from the problematic modernist creed of functional separation, which prevents the structure from being integrated into the urban fabric. The building is actually paralyzing the entire downtown district. The scheme aims to transform the existing structure into a “vertical city”, filled with multiple activities. The proposed design deploys public space as a means to link the existing cityscape with the new public spaces of the tower.

Appraisal by the jury
The jury read the project as a kind of manifesto that questions the tenets of the Modern Movement and proposing instead an understanding of architecture enriched by multifunctional relationships, social interaction, and spatial sequences. The project presents a strategy of how to deal with the built legacy of the post-war era, without destroying its substance – a process of transformation rather than erasure.

Project data
Context: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Public
Background: Research project

Further authors
Image 3: Original tower design with different entities to work on identification.

Image 4: Disused car ramp brings people from the street level to the roof of the city.

Image 5: The project link: for the first time in 40 years, the tower connects with its ground and the heart of the city.

Image 6: The journey allows public to start from the piazza and proceed to the top of the tower through various spaces.

Image 7: A variable thickness double skin creates in-between spaces inside the building’s existing volume.

Image 8: From the disused car ramp, the different entities of the city and the tower can be seen and linked.

Image 9: A passage between the legs of the tower links different part of the city (old and new).

Image 10: The meeting of the city’s horizontal and the project’s vertical create a shared public space.