

Paris, 23 June 2025

Press release

Prix Versailles 2025: The World's Most Beautiful Campuses

Today, 23 June 2025, the Prix Versailles is releasing the World's Most Beautiful Campuses List 2025.

Veritable spearheads for higher education institutions, these new structures are undeniably contributing to their stature, both locally and internationally. Whether the project consisted of a renovation, an extension or a new construction, the radiance and natural growth of these prestigious centres of academia are a delight to behold.

Jérôme Gouadain, Secretary General of the Prix Versailles, reiterates the strong connection between education and its setting:

“At a time when our youth’s educational aspirations have never been so adaptable, so changeable, so innovative or so pressed by the new world order being built by artificial intelligence, it is important for universities to accompany this shift by providing solidity, rationality, high standards, care for the environment, and aesthetics to their students and staff. All this contributes to both hard work and well-being – intangibles that architecture embodies and serves superbly. That way, these new centres of excellence can become real incubators. They inspire a hope for a major ecological, social and cultural revolution that will foster dialogue, a revolution that the world needs now more than ever.”

As with the previously announced categories, three of these projects will also receive the further distinction of a World Title – Prix Versailles, Interior or Exterior – to be awarded in December.

The prizes discerned by the Prix Versailles aim to promote intelligent sustainability, in which culture serves and transcends the notion of the environment.

The next World Selections for 2025 will be announced on 30 June for Airports, on 1 September for Emporiums, on 3 November for Passenger Stations and on 10 November for Sports.



PRIX VERSAILLES

WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CAMPUSES LIST 2025

James Cook University

Engineering and Innovation Place

Townsville, Australia

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

School of Design

Shanghai, China

University of Copenhagen

Niels Bohr Bygningen

Copenhagen, Denmark

LCI Barcelona

Barcelona, Spain

University of Oxford

Gradel Quadrangles, New College

Oxford, United Kingdom

Leiden University

Herta Mohr

Leiden, The Netherlands

*The Laureates are listed in the alphabetical order of the countries they represent
(based on their two-letter ISO 3166 country codes).*



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PRESENTATION OF THE LAUREATES

James Cook University Engineering and Innovation Place

Townsville, Australia

The expression “Less is more”, which has been attributed to the architect Mies van der Rohe, has materialised here in remarkable form.

The James Cook University Engineering and Innovation Place demonstrates – through an uncommon choice – that it is possible to get more by building two times less, replacing 20,000 m² of traditional facilities with just 10,000 m² of flexible, high-utilisation environments. The rest is all scenery.

Developed in collaboration with the Queensland-based architectural firm Kirk Studio, this project unfolded brilliantly through the use of simple materials and an optimal layout.

The dramatic parasol roof provides climatic protection while allowing full façade transparency from within and without, and delivering unprecedented storm resistance capacities. In addition to redefining tropical architecture in dry climates, the site’s spartan structural elements serve as a catalyst for dynamic interaction and cross-disciplinary collaboration. A long-term solution that is wholly aligned with contemporary values.



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Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Design

Shanghai, China

The School of Design at Jiao Tong University was established in 2018 at the time of the consolidation of three disciplines: Architecture, Design, and Landscape Architecture. Divided between a cluster of three buildings constructed in 2003, the main challenge was to create a unifying central space for the new school.

This transformation, effected by Studio Ruan Xing, exceeded the initial roadmap by devising a new hall that has since become the school's emblem.

A true light well, it is crowned by a monumental wooden structure that fits perfectly with the existing reinforced concrete frame.

Inspired by the rainbow bridges that appeared during the Song dynasty (960-1279), the structure was designed for repairability and replaceability. It has the look of a modern-day nave, with a glass roof that further contributes to its cathedral aesthetic.

Bedecked with new terracotta façades, the institution reveals itself fully through a judicious dialogue between two seemingly antithetical cultures. The result is a real tribute to design.



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© Su Shengliang



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University of Copenhagen Niels Bohr Bygningen

Copenhagen, Denmark

Niels Bohr, the 1922 Nobel laureate in physics, believed in openness, exchange and the fusion of ideas.

Designed to unite all the University of Copenhagen's Faculties of Science, the building that now bears his name breaks down traditional silos to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

The campus consists of two volumes connected by an elevated skywalk, symbolically and physically uniting education, research and the wider community.

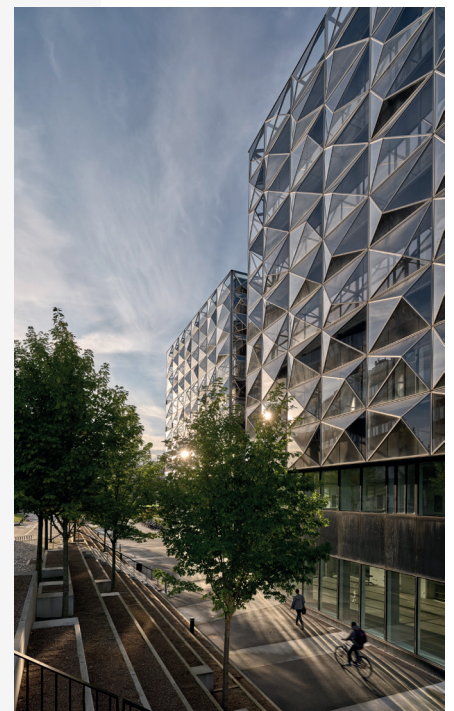
At its heart is the Troposphere, an infinity-shaped atrium surrounded by nine towers, each of them housing a different department and distinguished by unique materials and colours.

The double façade and overall structure serve to maximise natural ventilation and the penetration of daylight.

Danish studios Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects and CCO Architects drew up the blueprints for a profoundly inspiring design comprising a single, easily recognisable envelope.



© Adam Mork



© Adam Mork



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LCI Barcelona

Barcelona, Spain

On former industrial land in Poblenou, 22@ has become the city's knowledge and tech district. Designed as a "vertical campus" arranged around two large, flexible halls, the European hub of the international LCI Education network is a perfect fit for that urban transformation.

The architectural firm Circular Studio organised campus circulation peripherally, along the façades, in pathways that also act as social spaces, work areas and exhibition zones. The rhythm of the envelope, alternating between solids and voids, blurs the line between interior and exterior, while an elevated plaza at the heart of the building offers sea views and delicious breezes off the water.

Recycled aluminium helps the building blend into its environment. And its geometry functions as a solar control device, blocking direct sunlight to prevent glare whilst maximising indirect light. For the students at LCI Barcelona school of design and visual arts, the sun has ceased to be an enemy.



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University of Oxford Gradel Quadrangles, New College

Oxford, United Kingdom



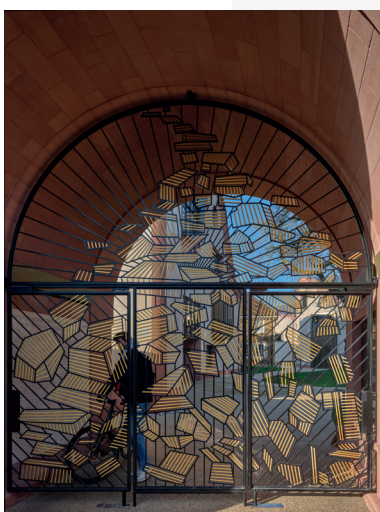
© Will Pryce

The first ever planned university quadrangle was built at Oxford in the 14th century, and the first open-sided quad – inspired by the Cour d'Honneur at the Palace of Versailles – followed in the 17th century.

Like the original New College buildings, the Gradel Quadrangles – named after the donor who made them possible – are infused with a distinct sense of place in terms of their architecture and material treatment. This was achieved through David Kohn Architects, resulting in an unexpected addition to Oxford's historic, green cityscape.

The project, replete with engaging curves, includes student bedrooms, study space and a recital hall, alongside a range of facilities for the New College School, plus a tower standing 21.5 metres tall.

This original form retains all of the campus's collegiate spirit and, despite the ancient history of the quadrangle, its reinterpretation here provides a fertile model for the 21st century.



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Leiden University Herta Mohr

Leiden, The Netherlands

This is a prime example of a thoughtful tribute to the history of admirably revisited structuralist architecture from the 1970s.

While the majority of the former Cluster Zuid – which consisted of seven “houses” – has been preserved, the central “house” was replaced by a spacious atrium and a new main entrance, significantly improving the spaces’ natural lighting and encouraging collaboration and interaction between students and professors.

The new Herta Mohr building is a real argument in favour of circularity, and a role model for the reuse of materials. For example, the cleverly arranged panels adorning the interior surfaces of the outer shell, and forming gorgeous decorative walls, were created out of repurposed wooden ceiling slats. Bricks and paving stones from the demolished house were also reused.

This urban project, implemented by De Zwarte Hond, blends heritage with innovation in a relevant response to the challenge of transforming outdated infrastructure into an inviting and sustainable future-proof environment.



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