

Zt Prize 2025

National Student Architectural Design Competition

Jury Report

The Jury convened on **17 January 2026** to evaluate the projects submitted to the **2025 ZT Student Competition**.

As one of the principal jury members, **Gabriel**, informed the committee that he would be unable to attend, **alternate jury member Alper Gündüz** participated as a full jury member. The participants in the online jury meeting were as follows:

Jury Members:

Ekin Sakın *Architect*, **Alper Gündüz** *Architect*, **Kozan Uzunoğlu** *Architect*, **Sait Onur Edeş** *Architect*, **Teun Spruijt** *Architect*.

Jury Advisory Member: **Kaan Tanalı** ,*PE*

Rapporteurs: **Beyza Çebişli** *Architect*, **Ayşen Çerşil** *Architect*, **Zeynep Onur** *Architect*, **Babür Ülgüner** *Architect*.

Preliminary Checks:

Student identification documents, application forms, and project submittals had been checked by the rapporteurs following the submission deadline of **22 Dec 2025**. Out of **75** total submissions, seven projects were disqualified due to non-compliance with the Eligibility Requirements explained in the Competition Brief. Those were:

zt12726	master's student / disqualified
zt03500	incomplete and incorrect submission / disqualified
no alias	incomplete and incorrect submission / disqualified
no alias	incomplete and incorrect submission / disqualified
zt50731	incorrect sheet layout / disqualified
Tilkiler	no alias, incorrect sheet layout / disqualified
no alias	incomplete and late submission / disqualified

Anonymity of Entries:

The remaining **68** qualifying projects were given a number from 01 to 68 by the rapporteurs to provide anonymity and ease of reference. These numbers were digitally covered over the aliases before being shared with the jury members. Projects with these new numbers were shared with the jury members on **12 January 2026** prior to the jury session to allow for a thorough pre-review. The jury members made a declaration of honesty indicating they had not seen the projects participating in the competition before the date of 12 January 2026.

First Round Evaluations

Each project numbered from 01 to 68 was opened to discussion and jointly reviewed by the jury members. The jury was pleased to see that many of the submitted projects were well presented with appropriate architectural language and remarkable ideas.

However, given the vast number of submissions, 54 projects were unanimously eliminated in the first round due to failing to bring forward a strong architectural concept that questioning the “tower” and as explained below as well.

The following entries were **eliminated in the First Round**:

01 zt95911	19 zt26462	35 zt24302	56 zt59199
02 zt02042	20 zt19746	38 zt91816	57 zt13191
03 zt01129	21 zt13608	40 zt18756	58 zt79069
04 zt00007	23 zt48610	41 zt14345	59 zt99521
05 zt04051	24 zt52468	42 zt03204	61 zt12003
06 zt06057	25 zt19672	44 zt03090	62 zt94233
07 zt91024	26 zt17577	45 zt22277	63 zt64251
08 zt23060	27 zt02606	47 zt77721	64 zt18257
09 zt52442	29 zt06062	49 zt41201	65 zt17394
11 zt01420	30 zt00123	51 zt19058	66 zt17416
13 zt20262	31 zt33470	52 zt80705	67 zt01020
14 zt25181	32 zt12781	53 zt31225	68 zt12447
16 zt97231	33 zt19902	54 zt22122	
18 zt64013	34 zt01125	55 zt24242	

These projects were eliminated primarily because they lacked architectural drawings and were presented only as single visual representations, with significant proportional inconsistencies.

Second Round Evaluations

14 projects evaluated in this round. 9 of them were eliminated and the rest 5 projects advanced to the Third Round:

Project No. 10, zt27095

The project presents a clear concept based on a transition from collective urban life to individual solitude, expressed through a simple spiral form. While the idea is coherent and clearly communicated, the proposal remains largely diagrammatic, offering limited spatial variation and a repetitive experience across levels. The project lacks the architectural depth and formal development needed to progress

further. The rotating staircase, treated in a minimal manner within the park, was not considered conceptually strong or original. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round.**

Project No. 12, zt23789

The project's simplicity is appreciated and the concept is clearly articulated. The staircase is effectively used as an architectural device to slow movement and frame multiple views, supported by a consistent modular and structural logic. The shifting platforms and exposed steel structure create a legible spatial sequence and show control over proportion and construction. However, the experience remains largely repetitive, with limited differentiation between levels beyond minor dimensional changes. While the proposal is conceptually coherent, it does not sufficiently expand its spatial, contextual, or programmatic ambition, nor does it develop a stronger artistic expression. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round.**

Project No. 15, zt34051

The project was positively evaluated for revealing views at certain points during ascent and descent, considering human scale in its openings, proposing encounters with everyday life, and its spatial organization. The project **unanimously advanced to the Third Round.**

Project No. 17, zt04087

The conceptual framework and monumental character of the project were found to be very strong. However, its lack of relationship with the ground and the absence of a proposal establishing a connection with the site and surrounding context were criticized. It was discussed that the project could be located anywhere. Despite these critiques, due to its originality, the project **unanimously advanced to the Third Round.**

Project No. 22, zt22516

The site selection and the design establishing a strong connection between land and water were highly valued. The visual impact of the project was considered powerful, and the concept was found to be clearly and expressively communicated through the diagrams. The project was evaluated as belonging to its site and responding to its context.

Although it was discussed that the design expressed in plan could have achieved a more plastic articulation in form, the project **unanimously advanced to the Third Round** due to its conceptual strength.

Project No. 28, zt01216

The project was considered conceptually strong, and the presentation clearly communicated the design intent. The idea of stones carrying collective memory and being assembled by the public along the staircase was noted as an original concept that introduced a temporal dimension to the project. However, the final architectural form remained at the level of an initial sketch and was insufficient in translating the concept into a clear architectural statement. The proposal relies heavily on symbolism, with limited spatial differentiation and experiential variation beyond the central spiral gesture. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round**.

Project No. 36, zt48237

The project presents a strong poetic narrative and a distinctive graphic language, particularly in its exploration of sound, wind, and materiality through sculptural form. However, the proposal remains largely conceptual, with architectural decisions driven more by metaphor than by a resolved relationship between structure, program, and spatial performance. The tower is treated primarily as an object, while its grounding, circulation, and public interface lack sufficient clarity and architectural depth. Despite its evocative atmosphere and careful representation, the project does not fully translate its conceptual ambition into a coherent and operable architectural system. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round**.

Project No. 37, zt53241

The project offers a thoughtful interpretation of “in-between” as a spatial condition, demonstrating strong contextual awareness and a carefully sequenced experiential narrative. Compared to other submissions, the staircase tower added to the existing structure was noted as a distinctive approach. While the concept is clearly articulated and well represented, the proposal remains overly dependent on its conceptual premise and does not develop into a robust architectural system. The intervention reads more as a reversible installation than a decisive architectural act, with circulation and platforms treated primarily as experiential elements rather than integrated structural and programmatic components. As a result, the staircase lacks internal spatial meaning and the project does not successfully translate its concept into form. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round**.

Project No. 39, zt65243

With its extremely minimal design approach, the circulation loop proposed through the staircase was discussed as a questioning and thought-provoking concept. The project was noted for its strong and dynamic sculptural presence within the park, its poetic expression, and its clear conceptual clarity achieved by eliminating all non-essential elements.

The project was evaluated as an original design that critically engaged with vertical circulation, generating ideas about descent as much as ascent, and discussing the

concept of infinity through movement. The project **unanimously advanced to the Third Round.**

Project No. 43, zt24964

The project presents a clear and well-articulated narrative around human–bird coexistence, supported by a coherent spatial sequence and consistent architectural language. The tower is convincingly resolved as an object, with careful attention to circulation, modularity, and experiential progression. However, the proposal remains largely illustrative, with its ecological claims and symbiotic intent not sufficiently supported by architectural or environmental performance. While the project demonstrates technical clarity and strong representation skills, its conceptual ambition does not extend beyond a well-designed observation structure. For these reasons, the project was **unanimously eliminated in the Second Round.**

Project No. 46, zt72116

Although the title refers to “the echo of the castle,” the project does not establish a clear architectural reference to a castle, leaving the intended meaning of the environment ambiguous. While the atmospheric quality of the presentation is effective and the use of light is carefully explored, its conceptual rationale is not fully clarified. The project presents a strong poetic narrative rooted in memory, materiality, and the experiential relationship between stone, light, and movement. The reverse journey and perforated massing create compelling spatial atmospheres and are convincingly represented. However, the proposal remains primarily experiential, with limited architectural resolution in terms of structure, construction logic, and programmatic necessity. As a result, the narrative ambition is not translated into a rigorous architectural system, leading to its **unanimous elimination in the Second Round.**

Project No. 48, zt01058

The project presents a clear narrative of introspection, translating the act of ascent into a sequence of spatial pauses and experiential thresholds. The volumetric articulation and controlled use of light create a calm and consistent atmosphere, supported by strong visual representation. While the conceptual idea was considered valuable, it is not sufficiently reflected in the architectural form. The sectional intentions are not fully realized in the built massing, and the voids appear unresolved. As a result, the architectural system does not develop beyond its conceptual framework, leading to the project’s **unanimous elimination in the Second Round.**

Project No. 50, zt12783

The inversion of the tower concept—constructing the spatial experience through descent rather than ascent—was highlighted as an original conceptual approach. The project **unanimously advanced to the Third Round.**

Project No. 60, zt52717

The project presents a clear experiential narrative structured around ascent, pause, and encounter, supported by a strong philosophical framework and a consistent visual language. The proposal was noted for its originality, and the introduction of structural columns was recognized as a more realistic approach to structural resolution. While the project succeeds as an experiential installation within the landscape, it lacks the architectural rigor and spatial clarity required to progress further. Inconsistencies between plans and sections, unclear access to the staircase, a complex and contradictory form, and a bridge atop the tower that fails to generate meaningful social interaction—being perceived as a forced encounter—ultimately led to the project's **unanimous elimination in the Second Round**.

Third Round Evaluations

Following the evaluation of projects **15, 17, 22, 39, and 50**, which advanced to the Third Round, the jury reached the following conclusions and determined the top three projects.

Project No. 15, zt34051

The project was evaluated as a proposal with a clear conceptual framework, defining the tower as an architectural interface mediating between ground and horizon through a vertical sequence. The jury positively evaluated the project for revealing views at specific moments during ascent and descent, its consideration of human scale in openings, and its spatial organization that allows encounters with everyday life. The conceptual consistency of the proposal and its interpretation of the tower as an experiential and transitional element were regarded as its primary strengths.

The project's approach to integrating movement, perception, and spatial transition within a compact vertical structure was discussed as a thoughtful architectural strategy.

However, the jury critically discussed the project's relationship with the site and its immediate context. While the proposal establishes a dialogue between landscape and architecture, the connection to the specific characteristics of the given site remained limited. It was discussed that the conceptual framework could be applied to different locations without substantial modification.

In addition, inconsistencies between representations were noted. The contradiction between the lower-left three-dimensional representation and the other drawings was discussed, as well as whether the proposed ground-floor café program was necessary within the overall architectural concept. These issues weakened the clarity of the architectural resolution at an advanced evaluation stage.

Despite these critiques, the project was acknowledged for its strong architectural qualities. One jury member (**Teun Spruijt**) proposed the project for the **Second Prize**. Nevertheless, due to the identified contextual and representational shortcomings, the project was eliminated in the **third evaluation round**, prior to the formation of the award group.

Project No. 17, zt04087

The project proposes a strong architectural approach, redefining the tower as an inward-oriented spatial experience rather than a conventional object of observation. Its conceptual framework and monumental character were evaluated as highly successful. The jury appreciated the clarity and consistency of this conceptual stance, as well as the project's original interpretation of emptiness as an architectural generator.

The proposal distinguishes itself through its disciplined formal language and evocative representational quality. The monolithic massing, vertical ascent, and sectional studies effectively communicate an experiential architectural idea and challenge traditional tower typologies. In this regard, the project was discussed as a coherent and original architectural statement with strong intellectual ambition.

However, the jury critically noted the project's lack of relationship with the ground and the absence of a strategy establishing a meaningful connection to the site and surrounding urban context. While the project's detachment from the city was presented as a deliberate conceptual choice, this resulted in a weak dialogue with the public realm and site-specific conditions. It was repeatedly discussed that the project, despite its internal coherence and strength, could be located in almost any context, limiting its architectural relevance within the given site.

Despite these limitations, the jury acknowledged the project's originality and conceptual clarity. One jury member (**Sait Onur Edeş**) proposed the project for the **Third Prize**, and another (**Kozan Uzunoglu**) for the **Second Prize**. Nevertheless, due to the absence of a site-specific and contextual strategy, the project was eliminated in the **third evaluation round**, prior to the formation of the award group.

Project No. 22, zt22516

The project was awarded the **Second Prize** for its strong conceptual framework and its sensitive interpretation of the tower as a spatial condition shaped by natural cycles. The site selection within Karaalioğlu Park and the design's ability to establish a strong and meaningful relationship between land and water were highly valued. The jury evaluated the project as clearly belonging to its site and responding convincingly to its environmental and contextual conditions.

The integration of cyclical movements—particularly lunar phases and tidal conditions—into the architectural narrative was positively assessed. The vertical organization, extending both below and above the water level, articulates descent and ascent as complementary spatial experiences. The gradual transition from

submerged, introspective spaces to open, light-filled levels reinforces the project's conceptual clarity and experiential depth.

The project's visual impact was considered powerful, and the concept was found to be clearly and expressively communicated through diagrams. The circular and modular spatial organization, articulated through stairs, and intermediate landings, was regarded as a successful strategy for encouraging slowing down, observation, and social encounter. The consideration of human scale and the framing of views throughout the vertical journey were identified as significant architectural qualities.

However, the jury also discussed that the spatial logic expressed in diagrams could have achieved a more plastic articulation in formal terms. While the project demonstrates a high level of conceptual consistency and atmospheric strength, further exploration of formal plasticity could have enhanced its architectural expression.

Due to the significance of its site selection, the particularly strong expression of the concept in the plan drawings, and its originality, the project was awarded the **Second Prize** by a **2–3 majority vote**, receiving votes from **Ekin Sakın, Sait Onur Edeş, and Alper Gündüz**.

Project No. 39, zt65243

The jury positively evaluated the project's strong and dynamic sculptural presence within the park. Its poetic expression and conceptual clarity, achieved through the deliberate elimination of all non-essential elements, were regarded as significant architectural qualities. The separation of circulation routes for ascent and descent, together with the considered use of light and shadow, reinforces the project's experiential narrative and spatial legibility. The simplicity of the architectural language and the originality of the form were discussed as key strengths.

The proposal's ability to articulate different scales of perception—through compression, expansion, enclosure, and openness—was also noted. The integration of landscape, horizon, and bodily movement into a continuous spatial sequence contributes to a clear and focused architectural idea.

However, the jury also discussed limitations related to architectural representation. The lack of clarity regarding access in the drawings was criticized, and it was noted that the circulation journey indicated by the red line was not consistently represented across the architectural drawings. These issues weakened the overall readability of the project at an advanced evaluation stage.

Despite these shortcomings, the project's conceptual strength, sculptural impact, and critical engagement with vertical movement distinguished it among the submissions. The project was awarded the **Third Prize** by a **2–3 majority vote**, receiving votes from **Ekin Sakın, Alper Gündüz, and Teun Spruijt**.

Project No. 50, zt12783

The project was awarded the **First Prize** for its highly original inversion of the tower concept, constructing the spatial experience through **descent rather than ascent**. The jury evaluated the proposal as a strong and critical architectural response that redefines the understanding of a tower not as a vertical structural object, but as a **route of observation**, a sequence of changing levels, and a *physical equivalent of an inner journey*. The idea of perceiving oneself inside a tower through the act of descending was highlighted as a particularly strong and original conceptual approach.

The project's relationship with its site and landscape was regarded as exceptionally sensitive. Embedded within the natural terrain and articulated through light, water, and depth, the architectural intervention remains minimal while allowing the landscape to dominate. The use of water as both a spatial and reflective medium reinforces the project's conceptual focus on perception, reflection, and bodily presence rather than visual dominance.

The experiential sequence, defined by controlled light, enclosure, and gradual descent, was discussed as poetic and spatially convincing. The project successfully shifts architectural attention from panoramic viewing toward introspection and reflection, transforming downward movement into a meaningful architectural narrative.

The project deliberately eliminates all non-essential elements and relies on a limited architectural vocabulary to communicate its intent. This restraint strengthens both the conceptual precision and the atmospheric impact of the proposal.

However, the jury also discussed that the **architectural quality of the stair design remains weak** in relation to the overall conceptual strength of the project. Despite this limitation, the power of the central idea and its architectural articulation were considered to outweigh this shortcoming.

For these reasons, the project was awarded the **First Prize** by a **2–3 majority vote**, receiving votes from **Ekin Sakın, Sait Onur Edeş, and Alper Gündüz**.