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Title: **Debating Tall: Gazprom Tower**

Author: Philip Nikandrov, RMJM

Subject: History, Theory & Criticism

Keyword: Debating Tall

Publication Date: 2011

Original Publication: CTBUH Journal, 2011 Issue II

Paper Type:

1. Book chapter/Part chapter
2. **Journal paper**
3. Conference proceeding
4. Unpublished conference paper
5. Magazine article
6. Unpublished

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Debating Tall: Gazprom Tower

Ever since the project was first announced in 2005, the proposed 396-meter (1299-foot) tall tower of the Okhta Center has been the subject of fierce debate in the Russian city of St. Petersburg. The latest news announced by local governor Valentina Matviyenko is that the proposed HQ of Russian gas giant Gazprom will be relocated away from the city's historical heart. Given the controversy we ask ourselves: does the originally proposed Okhta Center belong in the City of St. Petersburg?

YES

Philip Nikandrov
RMJM

The elegant glass needle of the Okhta Center tower was designed to be another spire in the city skyline. As such it would be an addition to the historical panoramas featuring beautiful golden domes and spires, as well as the monuments of the 20th century.

The tower shape represents a transition between dome and spire, and is proportioned similar to many Western European gothic and baroque cathedral towers. The obelisk shape was to be enclosed by an innovative energy-efficient double skin façade, reflecting the sky and providing a dynamic visual movement of optical illusion caused by the three-dimensional curvatures of its five twisted wings.

Given its location five kilometers away from the city center, the height of the tower was defined to create an object of secondary dominance in relation to the existing iconic vertical elements. The tower would not even appear on most iconic views featured on postcards and in tourist guide books.

This project was canceled due to a purely political motivation "to put an end to discussions around the project." I believe that real art cannot avoid controversy and

discussion. By nature, achieving general consensus is impossible, especially when it comes to issues of high-rise developments in the buffer zones of historical cities.



Okhta Center © RMJM

NO

Kirill Strakhov
Deputy of Yabloko (Apple) Party/Head of Regional Committee on Historical Heritage of Kalininsky District of St. Petersburg

It is obvious that Gazprom wants to leave its own mark on the cityscape and history of St. Petersburg, and that it wants to claim its place among the symbols of the city. I have no doubt that this desire is sincere, and furthermore I think it would be unfair to deny Gazprom its right to

make a significant contribution to the development of our city.

The problem is not this intention itself, but the enormous inappropriateness of these particular ambitions in relation to the existing context of the city. The physical size of Gazprom's aspirations simply does not fit, by any standards, within the context of the city of St. Petersburg, with its tremendous history and traditions.

During recent archaeological research undertaken at Okhtinsky Cape, the ancient castles of Nyenshans and Landskrona were discovered. These are considered unique historical and cultural artifacts of European importance. Gazprom can and should dispose its ownership of the Okhtinsky Cape to preserve the archaeological sites and create an open air historical, cultural and tourist conservation area. This would be a new conceptual expression of the city of St. Petersburg. As such, Gazprom's name would be associated with a tremendously positive symbolic contemporary monument in the city of St. Petersburg.

Thoughts on this matter can be posted on the CTBUH Skyscraper Group on LinkedIn at <http://linkedin.ctbuh.org>.

What's on the CTBUH Web?

<http://www.ctbuh.org>



New Look for CTBUH Website

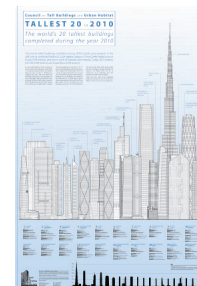
We are pleased to announce a complete revamp of the website, with new materials such as a "featured tall building" section, as well as better organizational/navigational systems to unlock the wealth of information on tall buildings and urban habitat.



2010 Awards Symposium – Video Interviews

Eight interviews were conducted in conjunction with the 2010 Awards

Symposium including: Richard Cook (Cook+Fox), Alex Whitbread (FCB Studios), William Pedersen (KPF), Ron Klemencic (MKA Engineers). In addition, all interviewees responded to two common questions regarding the past and future of tall buildings.



Tallest 20 in 2010 Poster

The Council has released a poster featuring the world's 20 tallest buildings completed during the year 2010, along with specific project information including:

building location, height, structural material, architect, etc. To find out more please visit: <http://store.ctbuh.org>