

2014 Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium

A Chronological Record Of Events From
The 2014 Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium

Johannes Kepler Grammar School
Prague, Czech Republic

Thursday, April 10th ~ Tuesday, April 15th 2014

Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations:

WIS Winchester International Symposium
JKWIS Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium
ALA African Leadership Academy
CCM Claustro Collegio Moderno
GICL Garodia International Centre for Learning
JKGS Johannes Kepler Grammar School
KGS Karachi Grammar School
MBA Montgomery Bell Academy
NHS Nada High School
RI Raffles Institution
SCHS Shiyani Cooperative High School
WinColl Winchester College

‘The Symposium Group’ and ‘The Group’ are capitalized as proper nouns

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Day 1 Thursday 10th April

Staggered arrival times over several days for the various school groups no doubt kept the 2014 JKWIS organizers on their toes, and they were busy with registering each group, collecting necessary documents, providing lunches and also arranging wonderful morning and afternoon tours of the glorious city of Prague. These tours allowed most of The Group members to meet and spend time with each other for the first time out of their online preparation community.

At 6:30pm precisely The Symposium Group of students, teachers and headmasters are led to the JKGS school hall and at once we are treated to a wonderful choral performance by the JKGS school choir and musicians, led by Mr. Roman Michalek. The selected songs are in both English and Czech and set the scene for the international flavor of the entire week. We also have a further two JKGS students as our MCs for the evening, Anna Winlelmannova and Anita Duskova. Speeches are eloquently made by headmaster of JKGS, Mr. Jiri Ruzicka, headmaster of WinColl, Mr. Ralph Townsend, and the academic director of The Symposium Group, Mr. Tim Parkinson.

Next, after each group spent a few minutes introducing themselves to the rest of the members to a PowerPoint montage of images from their schools, the chairs were cleared away and the welcome party buffet began to the finger tapping, hand drumming, foot-stomping (both on and off beat!) [Harmcore Jazz Band](#) and their amazing vocalists, Korolina Mala, Daniela Vanickova and Verca Ticha.

The evening reaches a superb ice-breaking climax as the three ladies begin grabbing The Symposium Group's students for some uninhibited, joyful dancing, which is thoroughly enjoyed by the students themselves, and the accompanying teachers and headmasters. The Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium has begun in spectacular fashion.

Day 2: Friday 11th April.

The second day of The Symposium began under a timely clear, sunny sky. The Group gathered at JKGS and proceeded to [Prague Castle](#), which boasts the twin honors of being the most visited attraction in the city, and the largest coherent castle complex in the world (nearly 70,000 square meters). There, we were treated to an informative two-hour walking lecture from architectural historian, Jana Ticha.

First, in the sun-drenched Lion Courtyard outside the Treasury of [Saint Vitus Cathedral](#), we heard a potted political history of Czechoslovakia from its creation at the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, through the ‘Velvet Revolution’ in 1989, to the peaceful dissolution into Slovakia and the Czech Republic 3 years later.

The tour then turned to the spectacular cathedral itself and its surrounding buildings. Constructed over a near-one-thousand-year period in four distinct architectural styles from the 10th century, it stands as both an eclectic, yet stunning monument to European architecture, and was a fine building upon which the group could focus its collective analytical mind. As Jana Ticha said, the cathedral consists of “everything possible, mixed together – but it works beautifully.”

After lunch at JKGS, The Group returned to Prague Castle complex where we met our new guides, art-history seniors, Lukas and Martin. Divided into two groups, we studied more deeply about the inside of St. Vitas Cathedral, the Old Royal Palace, and the [St. George Basilica](#). While inside the cathedral, Lukas reminds us that, interestingly, as history proceeds it does not necessarily follow that people learn more and use better techniques. “In fact, they knew more in the 14th century than they did in the 19th” he says as he describes the poor acoustics in the more modern sections of the building. “Secret techniques, lost in time,” he explains. Martin shows us the massive and awesome late 16th century [Vladislav Hall](#) in the Old Royal Palace, which at 16 meters wide represents one of the most amazing feats of architectural engineering of the Middle Ages.

Upon returning to JKGS, The Symposium Group finally met for their first discussion session. JKWIS academic director Tim Parkinson challenged the group to consider the following question, “What Can Architecture Tell Us About The National Story?” To assist the group with their assignment, Mr. Laurence Wolff (WinColl) and Mr. Jim Womack (MBA) invited the students to consider how certain examples of architecture within their home countries reflected their national stories, and to compare those with the examples we had seen during the tour. The Group then worked in their pairs on one-minute presentations, which were then shared with the other members. Students then spent a further 20 minutes creating PowerPoint presentations to answer Mr. Parkinson’s original question. We heard two excellent offerings from Garodia International Centre for Learning and Johannes Kepler Grammar School before time constraints forced an early conclusion to the proceedings for dinner. All other presentations were emailed to the academic director.

Day 3 Saturday, 12 April

Day 3 started early, and with a light rain falling in place of the clear blue skies of the previous day. The Symposium Group travelled by bus to the Faculty of Architecture. The present buildings are relatively new and were designed, we were told, by an octogenarian female architect. Our guide today is architectural historian, Lenka Burgerova, who tells us in one of the Faculty's three atriums that the building's glass-fronted open plan construction was actually quite controversial on its unveiling due to possible restrictions on students' personal freedoms. Ways in which architects use personal space is to be a central theme today.

The Group's first lecture of the day is provided by Jana Zdrahalova, who teaches us about the concept of inclusive versus exclusive space, and how architects can promote or facilitate both through their work. Her lecture provides various illustrations on how exclusion can be overt or 'soft' and how urban planners and architects alike use various forms of boundaries, again in both obvious and subtle ways. A key message in the lecture is that the creation of inclusive public space requires a simple design, simple upkeep and elements of natural social control. The lecture was followed by a short discussion on both graffiti and how the issue of ownership relates to our understanding of what constitutes public space.

Lenka herself then leads a lecture on how Europeans have historically made use of their social spaces, and how this has developed in Prague also. Reinforcing the theme of the day, The Group is reminded that architecture is not a decorative art, but a space creating art, which is primarily concerned with urban design and creating the urban environment.

We leave the Faculty of Architecture to find considerably improved, sunny weather. Our next destination is the [Prague National Technical Library](#). Opened in 2009, it is an amazing building which hosts the most extensive collection of Czech and foreign documents in the field of technology, and applied natural and social sciences related to technology in the Czech Republic. It has a modern, user-friendly design philosophy, and has been described as a "hi-tech living room for students". Upon entering, instantly remarkable are the ceiling strip lights aligned to the center of the building, the multicolored floor which actually relates to the relative tensile strength of the steel used in the foundations, and the hundreds of fabulous, though provoking cartoons by the Romanian artist, [Dan Perjovschi](#), that line the walls of the huge central atrium.

Our lecture here continues the general theme of the day, public space, and is enthusiastically delivered by architect, critic and theoretician, Mr. Adam Gebrian. In his opinion there is a public space paradox: far from there being not enough public space, there is in fact way too much, except it is not well developed nor utilized, and there is no real reason to go there. He continues to state that contemporary architecture is not promoted enough, although there are promising examples of creative and functional uses of public space around the world, which create great interest within The Group. Mr. Gebrian offers us his definition of what constitutes public space as "a place where you could sit on the ground and no one would say anything."

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Upon returning to JKGS, Mr. Tim Parkinson assigned the day's academic challenge, "How Can Architecture Help To Humanize The Urban Space?"

Each school made a one minute response on this, which raised such important points as architecture's responsibility to break down social barriers, the promotion of community and religious tolerance, and inclusivity through public transport and personal freedoms. At the end of these short presentations, the general discussion continues, focusing primarily on the issue of quantity over quality or vice-versa, before finally hearing three full presentations on the question from JKGS, NHS and CCM.

At 16:30, attention turned to the first three personal project presentations:

JKGS - The Pros and Cons of Open Plan Offices

CCM - [The Salt Cathedral of Zipaquira](#)

NHS - [Japanese Tea Rooms](#)

These brought the academic element of the third day to a close.

The Symposium Group then made their way by bus to the historical [Church of St. Lawrence](#) to hear a stunning recital of Haydn's Op. 77 No. 2 in F Major, and Dvorak's Op. 96 in F Major ("American") by the world famous [Skampa Quartet](#). This wonderful performance in the context of the ancient building was a once in a lifetime opportunity and The Group deeply appreciates Jarmilla for arranging it. At the end of the performance, the Winchester International Symposium Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the attending headmasters or representative teachers, and everyone present celebrated the cementing of the future of the W.I.S for at least the next five years.

Day 4 Sunday 13th April

Day 4 of the JKWIS begins early at JKGS where we hear two more personal project presentations:

MBA - Architectural Sustainability and the L.E.E.D (Leadership in Energy and Environmental, Design) accreditation system - [Music City Center, Nashville](#).

KGS - Architecture's Effect on the Individual – [The Sindh High Court](#)

From here, and for most of the remaining day, we are in the care of architecture and philosophy student, JKGS graduate, Josef Holecek. Under the day's general theme of 'Creating the Ideal Living Space' we first hear a lecture on the concept of [Genius Loci](#):

Josef then leads us to an art room where he divides the students into groups of 4 and sets them the practical task of creating a landscape upon which they'd then create a representational, historical progression from settlements to villages to towns and cities, and the changing use of land and geography. The final product would be representative of the group's chosen leader's country.

Each group enthusiastically dove into the task, working efficiently within their teams with the materials, including plaster of Paris, cardboard, newspaper, and modeling materials, such as clay, paints, miniature trees and figures, fixing spray, and so on. Upon completing their models, each group took turns describing their models and the significance of what they'd created. It was an activity, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and illustrated in a beautifully visual way the history of human settlement and land use. It was also a welcome change of pace and allowed The Group members to interact in a refreshing new way.

After clearing away and a quick lunch, we returned to the art room, where the students were invited to use pencils and paper to draw a representation of their ideal home, including as much detail as possible about features and the individual architect's reasons for including them. This brought to an end the academic element of day 4.

The relatively early finish to lectures and classes allows The Group a couple of hours of free time, after which we travel by tram and subway to the splendid 19th century [National Theatre](#), known as the alma mater of Czech opera. Upon our arrival, we are led on a short tour of the beautiful building by JKGS graduate, Josefina Formanova. The performance we are treated to is a subtitled version of [Jenufa](#), Leos Janacek's operatic adaptation of the play *Její Pastorkyňa* by Gabriela Preissova. Performed over three acts, it is a grim story of parental love, infanticide and redemption. We all feel very privileged to enjoy such an authentic experience in the heart of historic Prague.

Day 5 Monday 14th April

Grey skies and partial rain showers greeted us on the morning of day 5. The Group travelled out to the [headquarters](#) of the Československá obchodní banka, (ČSOB) where we were immediately led into a lecture hall to learn all about the radical building from architect, Marketa Jureckova. Predicated on a preference for functional space over flamboyance or expensive materials, this pioneering, LEED Gold accredited building is, we are told, much more a part of the town than a bank. Marketa tells us, and this is confirmed by a later tour of the facility, that it is (and was designed from the beginning to be) a ‘nice place to work.’

Late in the morning, Mr. Tim Parkinson set the challenge for the students to, “Discuss the Impact of Architecture on the Individual”, with a short discussion on the topic led by Mr. Jim Womack (MBA) and Ms. Chemeli Tuiya Kipkorir (ALA). Finally, the students were given 20 minutes to formulate their PowerPoint responses to the challenge.

Following a delicious lunch at the Czech Republic’s (superior) version of Subway, [Bageterie Boulevard](#), The Group proceeded to the [Hussite Church at Vinohrady](#). Designed in the constructivist style in 1935 by famed Cubist/Rondo-cubist architect, [Pavel Janak](#), it was radical in that it incorporated a theatre, an apartment building and a 6-storey tower as well as the church itself. Atop the 35 meter tower sits the symbol of the Hussite Church, a 700kg copper chalice. The tower was used as a radio mast during the Prague uprising and the church itself sheltered resistance fighters. In 1938 the theatre space beneath the church was converted into a columbarium – still in use today. All of this information we learn with interest from our lecturer, architectural historian Vendula Hnidkova.

A short walk from the Hussite Church is the (Catholic) [Church Of The Most Sacred Heart Of Our Lord](#). Designed by noted Slovenian architect, [Josip Plecnik](#), it is considered to be one of the most significant sacral buildings of the 20th century. In the 42m-high tower walls are huge (nearly 8 meter) diameter glazed clocks. In the basement is a spacious chapel with a barrel vault. Inside is an altar made of white marble, a 3 meter gilded figure of Christ and six statues of the patrons of Bohemia. Here, we are schooled in the history and construction of the church by JKGS 2nd grade student, Barbora Prymkova. Leaving Vinohrady, we alight from the subway to an unexpected and very exciting hailstorm, where various countries’ respective cries of ‘Ow!’ or ‘Ouch!’ are clearly audible.

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Back once again at JKGS, from 17:00 and concluding the academic activities for the day, we hear the remaining five personal projects in the following order:

ALA - “Architecture as a Reflection of Ideology – [The Constitutional Court of South Africa](#)”

RI - “Places Speak – Community Centers in Singapore”

WinColl - “[Winchester College](#) – A 600 Year Old Revolutionary Idea”

SCHS - “A Testimony to Cultural Evolution”

GICL - “Architecture as a Reflection of Time and Place : [The Chhatrapati Shivaji \(Rail\) Terminus](#)”

In the evening, students dined and socialized separately from the Heads and accompanying teachers.

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Day 6 Tuesday 15th April

The sixth and final day of the Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium saw an early start for The Group at JKGS, where in the conference room The Group is set another academic challenge by Mr. Tim Parkinson, “Examine The Connection Between Architecture And Ideology.”

The primary discussion is led by Mr. Laurence Wolff (WinColl) and Ms. Chemeli Tuiya Kipkorir (ALA), after which the students began work in pairs on their PowerPoint presentations for this topic. We hear three excellent offerings from RI, MBA and WinColl before returning to the theme of “Architecture and its Effect on the Individual” for two unheard presentations from ALA and SCHS.

After a short break, Mr. Tim Parkinson finally presents The Symposium Challenge,

“Examine The Evolution Of Architecture And Its Significance For Society, And Evaluate The Practical Steps We May Take To Best Influence Our Surroundings For Social, Material And Spiritual Progress Over Time.”

A discussion session was then led by Mr. Raphael Funwa Iluyomade (RI) and Mr. Mark Aynsley (NHS), in which the students tried to reach agreement on their collective understanding of social, material and spiritual progress. Upon completing this, the students formulated their written responses before lunch.

Upon return, the student pairs presented their responses to the group after which each accompanying teacher was given a minute to say a few words about their experiences during the week, and what they’d like to see included in the discussions about the final accord.

At last it was time for the students to work together to draft the 2014 JKWIS Accord. To facilitate this, The Group elected Rafae Omer Ghani (KGS) as their Chairperson, and Kieran Tam (WinColl) as their Secretary.

At 14:30, a break was called, in which Headmaster Mark Fox (GICL) addressed the Symposium Group to humorously report on the week’s activities and experiences of the JKWIS Principal’s Group. It was no doubt a new and interesting experience for the students to see into the minds of their Headmasters.

The drafting of the final accord then continued. Breaking into a number of focus groups, the students worked under extreme time pressure – regrouping to collate their cumulative thoughts, until at 15:45, and with sighs of relief and achievement from the students, the JKWIS Accord was delivered to the inbox of academic director, Mr. Tim Parkinson, and the work of the 2014 Symposium Group (Prague) was complete.

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That evening, looking resplendent in formal attire, the Symposium Group progresses to the [residence of the Mayor of Prague](#) for the closing banquet. To the sound of laughter and conversation, champagne is quaffed and canapés are nibbled. Gifts, E-mail addresses and endearments are exchanged and The Group's Final Accord is read aloud by Kieran Tam (WinColl). We listen to finely worded speeches of thanks from (beloved) headmasters Jiri Ruzicka (JKGS) and Mr. Ralph Townsend (WinColl) and also from the Mayor's Counsellor, Mrs. Ludmila Stanova and Mr. Tim Parkinson. Anna and Anita are once again on hand to help MC the proceedings, and we are all thrilled to once more be entertained by the Harmcore Jazz Band and singers. This creates a wonderfully fitting, but bittersweet, bookend to the spectacular success that was the 2014 Johannes Kepler Winchester International Symposium.

Mark Aynsley
Nada High School
April, 2014