



CHYBIK + KRISTOF ARCHITECTS AFFIRM THEIR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH BRUTALIST BUS TERMINAL REDESIGN

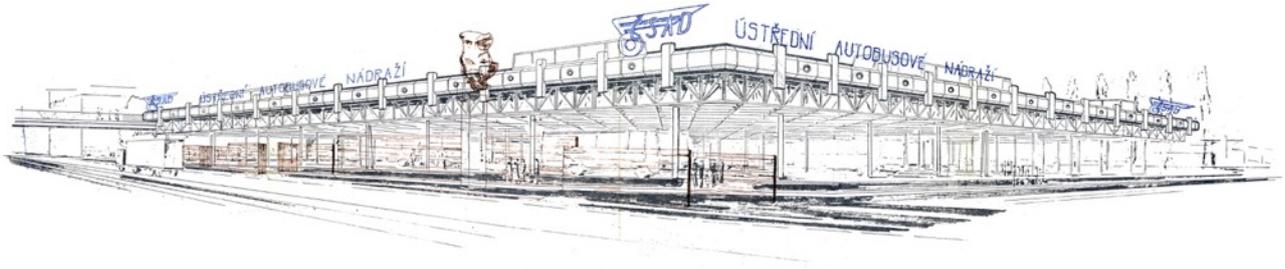
The new design for Brno's Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal revisits the station's defining role in the city's social fabric while preserving its Brutalist structure. Self-initiated by the architects, the project reaffirms their longstanding engagement for social change.



December 7, 2020 (Brno, Czech Republic) – CHYBIK + KRISTOF ARCHITECTS & URBAN DESIGNERS have announced the forthcoming ground-breaking of their redesign of Brno's Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal in the Czech Republic. Self-initiated by the architects in 2011 and with reconstruction to begin, the project involved preserving the existing Brutalist heritage structure while addressing the need to rethink a decaying public space into a functional entity adapted to evolving social needs. Stressing the station's central role in the city and region's social fabric, the project affirms CHYBIK + KRISTOF's continuous engagement in establishing architects' responsibility as catalysts for positive social change.

Designed in 1984 and built in 1988 in response to insufficient capacity of bus stations across the city, the Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal has continuously acted as the region's main bus station for intercity transport. Originally conceived as an extensive transportation hub, only two of its five initially projected construction phases were completed. Following the Czech Republic's 1989 Velvet Revolution, which prompted the first non-communist government since 1948, the station was privatized, resuming its role

as a bus station and foregoing construction plans and visions of its future. Established as a Brutalist heritage site, its high maintenance costs led to little upkeep, driving to its gradual deterioration.



In 2011, CHYBIK + KRISTOF, having recently established their studio in Brno, a city for which they shared a deep connection, grew aware of the station's decaying conditions. Eager to advance a positive alternative to a seemingly irrecoverable space, they reached out to its private owners with an elementary study and redesign proposal. Published and widely shared on social media, the proposal drew considerable media and public attention. In a process strongly facilitated by the architects, a conversation was prompted between local private stakeholders and public authorities – one revolving in part on the attainment of the sufficient funds to bring their vision to life. Accounting for the complexities of the project and after a four-year-long collaborative exchange, the needed funding was attained in 2015, notably through the project's recognition as a European funds project, thereby securing a prominent share of the investment.

Engaged in preserving the symbolic local heritage embodied by the Brutalist structure, CHYBIK + KRISTOF create a contemporary redesign, receptive to the station's primary role as a central transportation hub – through which over 820 regional, national and international connections and 17,000 passengers transit each day. Following the original square floorplan, the redesigned main hall is an open structure devoid of walls. Acting as a two-sided roof, the inner space houses the individual bus stops while the outer area serves as a parking space for buses. Envisioning it as an intrinsically public space, CHYBIK + KRISTOF replace the existing stands – temporary structures added in the 1990s – with an information office, ticketing and waiting areas as well new platforms and an orientation system accessible to the disabled. The architects' design gives prominence to light as easing access, evoking comfort and promoting safety. By removing the temporary stands, they open up the terminal onto the city, providing a second entry to the station at street level. While they repaint the main worn-down structure in white and install new light fixtures, they preserve and proudly bring to light the wall art on temporary stands throughout the station, previously concealed between them. Drawing a clear path to buses and various services, CHYBIK + KRISTOF transform the building into a dynamic social hub, channeling an unrestricted flow of locals and passengers alike.

Reflective of unclear, evolving and at times conflicting urban visions, the Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal is one of many similar residual spaces, preserved yet poorly maintained, and often entirely disconnected from their surroundings. As both architecture and design professionals and users of the urban space, CHYBIK + KRISTOF adopt the critical lens for which architects are well equipped – one that renders them both sensitive to and critical of an environment and brings them to consider the inherent relationships, nuances and synergies between the envisioned and the built, the public and the private,

the function and the experience. Affirming what has grown into a deep-seated social responsibility over the past decade, they consider the project through not only its function, but also a studied understanding of its impact on the social fabric. By involving diverse actors – architects, public entities and private partners, local and external – they once again demonstrate architects' central role as active exponents for change and instigators of a dialogue. In an attempt to correct past shortcomings, they see architects today as obliged to bring forth a holistic approach that moves beyond the mere construction process towards user-centered design which adheres to the environmental and social fabric.



Part of a generation of architects who founded their practice in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, CHYBIK + KRISTOF have continuously sought to self-initiate and take on projects responding to distinct social need. Advocating for architects to initiate and engage with positive social change, founding architects Ondřej Chybík and Michal Krištof state:

“Architects today share the obligation to address critical social and environmental issues. Beyond punctual functional concerns, our profession is tasked with acknowledging and deconstructing the shortcomings at the roots of our urban and social structures, thereby raising public awareness and promoting societal engagement. We see the Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal as embodying the three founding blocks of architects’ social responsibility. First, architecture responds to a functional need that must be clearly and efficiently addressed. Second, this need is expressed by the user of a space, whose experience of the latter must remain at the center of all concerns. Thirdly, and most importantly, architects intervene in a fragile ecosystem, one in which sociopolitical dynamics, economic factors, historical legacies, environmental concerns, to cite only a few, come together. It is essential, if not only ethical, to take all into account. Ultimately, by revisiting the past, engaging with the present and projecting to the future, architects can, and must, be catalysts for change.”

With completion due in 2021, this initial redesign acts as the first stage of a broader reconstruction and urban renewal project, with changes to the surrounding areas to follow.



MEDIA CONTACT

A R T Communication + Brand Consultancy (Berlin)

Roxane Latrèche | Account Manager | roxane@annarosathomae.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

About CHYBIK + KRISTOF

CHYBIK + KRISTOF is an architecture and urban design practice founded in 2010 by Ondřej Chybík and Michal Křištof. Operating with 50+ international team members and offices in Prague, Brno and Bratislava, the practice aims at creating bridges between private and public space, transcending generations and societal spheres. Taking into account local histories and environmental specificities, the studio works on a wide array of projects, ranging from urban developments to public and residential buildings. Recent projects include: Gallery of Furniture (Czech Republic), the Czech Pavilion at Expo 2015 (Milan, Italy) and Lahofer Winery (Czech Republic). The studio has been awarded a number of prizes including the 2019 Design Vanguard Award from *Architectural Record*, and was recently amongst the European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies' 2019 40 Under 40 Award winners.

<https://chybik-kristof.com/>

Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal

Zvonařka 411

617 00 Brno

Czech Republic

Project Team: Ondrej Chybik, Michal Kristof, Ondrej Svancara, Ingrid Spacilova, Adam Jung, Krystof Foltyn

Image credits:

Image 1. Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal, Brno, Czech Republic. Photograph by alexshootsbldings. Courtesy of CHYBIK + KRISTOF Architects & Urban Designers.

Image 2. Original drawing of the Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal, 1984.

Image 3. CHYBIK + KRISTOF, Visualization of the new Zvonařka Central Bus Terminal, Brno, Czech Republic. Courtesy of CHYBIK + KRISTOF Architects & Urban Designers.