

Interim

Jury Report

2011's Great Indoors Award was all about impermanence, reuse and strong ideas.

Words **Robert Thiemann**

Wins

For the third time in six years, *Frame* magazine takes stock of what's happening in the discipline we call 'interior architecture' – once again, in collaboration with two Maastricht-based institutions: Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture and NaiM/Bureau Europa. And, as both times before, an international jury goes into seclusion for a day and a half to study hundreds of entries from across the globe, to nominate 20 projects in four categories and, finally, to choose this year's winners.

Again, as in previous years, the main reaction is surprise. So many participants, such an international range, such exceptional quality. Work begins early in the morning; breaks are brief. The room is a silent sea of serious expressions and very little talk - it's all about looking, pondering, deliberating. Jurors have it easy? Here in Maastricht in late September, it's tough going.

Following tradition – a tradition still in its infancy, of course – the latest edition of The Great Indoors Award has a theme: In Between. In a time of economic stagnation and rising vacancy rates, competition organizers choose a theme that focuses on the temporary use of interiors. They see temporary (re) use as a cost-effective way to combat the problem of unoccupied space. What's more, temporary solutions can generate interest in the sites involved and can lead to a greater degree of social cohesion. Jury members have not been asked to use such criteria in judging the entries, however. The purpose of the competition theme is to stimulate discussion and to shed a certain light on the designs. This should also help the jury to define common ground on which to evaluate the projects.

Remarkably, the jury's nominations show an unspoken preference for reuse and impermanence.

Prominent examples of reuse are exemplified in commercial projects such as the Hermès Rive Gauche store in Paris and The Waterhouse at South Bund Hotel in Shanghai. The former revives an obsolete swimming pool in a pleasant urban neighbourhood; and the latter, which occupies an old building in rapidly advancing China, features contemporary interiors that interpret luxury in a new way. Rather than promising plush comfort and mad materials, these projects concentrate on giving new opportunities to nearly forgotten places. They heighten the potential of the city.

Less glamorous but just as impressive are interventions made to upgrade Nakamura Station, in Japan's Kochi Prefecture, and Ahoy, a concert hall and event venue in Rotterdam. In each case, the designers stripped the building but left existing functions and structures largely intact. Additions – modest to a fault – have a mainly infrastructural character. In both projects, reuse led to the re-creation of a wholly architectural experience and to an increase in the quality of public space.

The transient condition is most obvious in the nominated pop-up stores for Aēsop and Ohwow, and in Tatzu Nishi's hotel room-cum-art installation. Temporary interiors play by their own set of rules. The functional aspect takes a back seat to the creation of an indelible experience. These projects provide exactly that: all three are simply fizzling with fun. They are

The jury deliberates, discusses, debates and, finally, decides.



proof positive that temporary interiors can inject a sense of energy into existing environments.

Not only transience and reuse reach out to touch the members of the jury. They are also looking for authenticity, integrity and sense of place: projects unmistakably tied to a specific location. Or better still: projects that enhance the quality of public space. Some of the winning projects had it all.

The Winners

The winner in the Show & Sell category is no stranger to The Great Indoors Award, having been nominated in an earlier competition for Interior Design Firm of the Year. The work of March Studio stands out for its consistently high level of excellence. The three retail designs that the Australian practice submitted to this year's competition are no exception. March Studio realized permanent stores for skincare brand Aēsop in Melbourne and Paris, and a pop-up store in the French capital for the same client. Although submitted to the competition as separate designs, all three projects take first prize in the well-represented Show & Sell category, which received 132 entries.

The jury sees the three stores almost as a logical consequence of one powerful concept: the creation of a graphically developed space involving one natural material, one technique and the seamless incorporation of the product line. This design strategy has deep roots within the Aēsop brand, with its reputation for natural skincare products in plain, simple, graphically designed packaging.

In Melbourne, March Studio clad walls and ceiling with a layered matrix of plywood. Boards of hand-cut ash dominate the permanent outlet in Paris, and the pop-up store throws a party with 4500 cardboard shipping boxes. One brand, one concept, and three distinctive retail interiors with a strong family resemblance that can't be ignored. A strategy bursting with potential.

First prize in the Serve & Facilitate category goes to the makers of Power Toilets, a functional work of art on the Dutch coast, in the province of North Holland. Together with artists' collective Superflex, Nezu Aymo Architects developed a project that adds a touch of quality and surprise to public space and a new significance to an otherwise anonymous facility.

Based on mobile-phone photos, their public toilets are first-rate copies of those in the rest room of the UN Security Council, deep within one of the most heavily secured buildings in the world: the United Nations HQ in New York City. These designers make one of the most compelling statements available to those in the profession: their work transports the user to a place that is normally off limits to the general public. Power Toilets is a contemporary art installation that doubles as a functional toilet.

The jury sees more variation in the Relax & Consume category than in any other classification. Hospitality concepts seem to be a sure way to make an explicit appeal to the public. One project clearly stands apart from the rest of the luxurious, theatrical, conceptual and architectural interiors: a site-specific art installation by Tatzu Nishi. Since the 1990s, this Japanese artist has been transforming public objects – church steeples, monuments, even street lights – into extraordinary meeting places. A hotel room built around a national monument in Singapore in the spring of 2011 captures first prize in the Relax & Consume category for the Japanese artist, who's known for changing not only public spaces but also his name.

Occupying the space in an equally alienating and natural way, the hotel room embraces the head of the Merlion, a monument in the form of a mythical creature. The tiny hotel accepted reservations for the few weeks of its existence, proving its worth as a commercial asset as well as an art installation.

According to the jury, Nishi prompts viewers to look at the landmark and its urban environment in a new way and gives all observers, of every rank and station, the opportunity to 'own' a piece of art for a brief moment in time. Merlion Hotel is a consistent and playful project that addresses temporary ownership and looks at how people relate to public landmarks.

Winner in the Concentrate & Collaborate category is a workplace in the vicinity of Amsterdam for creative agency Tribal DDB. At first glance, this office looks quite simple. What makes i29's design so special is the use of a single material: felt. The wool-felting craft has a long history. In this digital-marketing office, i29 has applied the material both sophisticatedly and functionally, thus introducing a traditional handicraft into the 21st century.

Felt covering walls, ceilings, furniture and lamps provides the office and its 80 employees with good acoustics. The fabric also generates a warm and rather feminine atmosphere that is, however, anything but frumpish. Combined with a clever arrangement of areas for work and relaxation, felt has been used to establish privacy without sacrificing the desired sense of openness. In other words, the choice of material for this project could not be better. And this is the essence of good interior design. _

The Great Indoors Award 2011

Categories 4

Total entries 260

Winners 4

Runners up 16

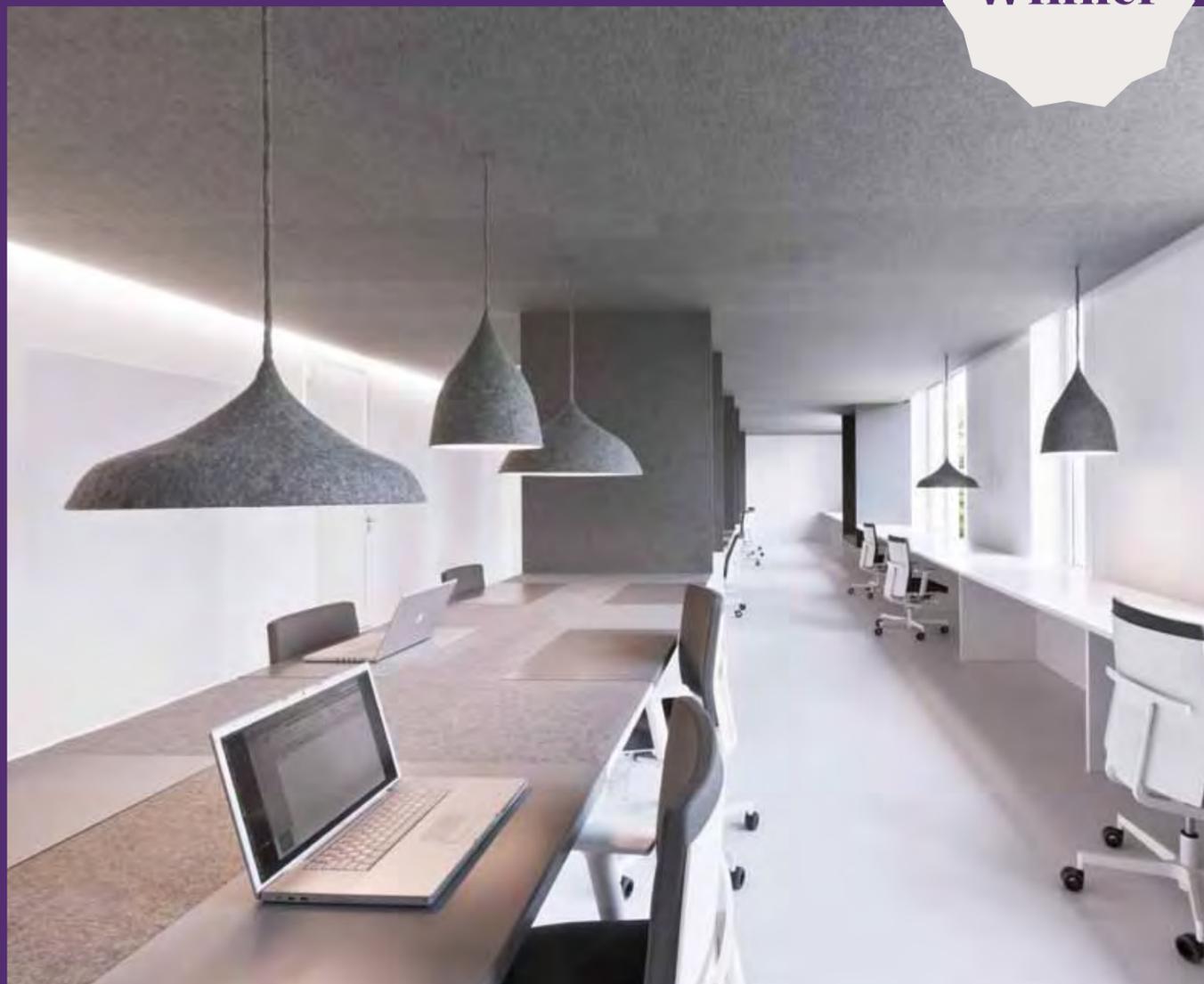
Countries represented 37

Jury members *Jan Boelen*, director of Z33, House for Contemporary Art, Hasselt; *Jurgen Bey*, designer, Studio Makkink & Bey, Rotterdam; *Kozo Fujimoto*, general manager of communications, Hermès Japan, Tokyo; *Ilya Oskolkov-Tsentsiper*, president of Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design, Moscow; *Timo de Rijk*, professor of design cultures, VU University, Amsterdam; and *Guus Beumer*, director of Marres and NaiM/Bureau Europa, Maastricht (chairman)
the-great-indoors.com/2011

Concentrate & Collaborate

Offices, auditoriums, studios

Winner



Tribal DDB

For the open-plan office of a creative company in the Dutch municipality of Amstelveen, i29 opts for the exclusive use of grey felt. A traditional material with a long history and the perfect choice for this project, felt generates warmth, good acoustics and privacy.

i29.nl

The right material can make a project

Runners Up

One Shelley Street

An open ten-storey atrium, featuring floating cantilevered meeting pods that form a 'meeting tree', eradicates the boundary between public reception space and private working areas in Clive Wilkinson's Sydney offices for banking group Macquarie.

clivewilkinson.com



Photo Shannon McGrath

Epean Studio

By inserting four new floors as slabs branching off a feature staircase, Atelier Ten reclaims a cavernous Shanghai warehouse, transforming it into an office for 100 employees.

theatelierten.com



Photo Shui Yanfei and Fei Wang



Media Plaza 2.0

Inside a dull-grey auditorium in Utrecht's main exhibition centre, a spectrum of zestily coloured chairs glows against a white backdrop. Liong Lie Architects' LED lighting scheme takes full credit for the chromatic effect.

lionglie.com



Photo Ralph Kämena

Haka Recycle Office

With materials sourced entirely from demolition sites and labour provided by ex-prisoners, Doepel Strijkers Architects transforms an old Rotterdam wholesale co-op building into a contemporary waste-free office complex.

dsarotterdam.com

Relax & Consume

Hotels, bars, cafés

Winner



Photo Yusuke Hattori

The Merlion Hotel

For the Singapore Biennale, Tatzu Nishi wraps a tiny (but functional) temporary hotel around a famous city landmark: the Merlion statue. The jury praises his ability to 'prompt viewers to look at the landmark and its urban environment in a new way' and to 'give observers of every rank and station the opportunity to "own" a piece of art for a brief moment in time'.

tatzunishi.net

With Nishi, we see a landmark in a new way

Before.



Runners Up



Niseko Lookout Café

Thin spruce boards echo the interior of a traditional Japanese farmhouse while generating a vivid yet contemporary sense of place in Design Spirits' Niseko Ski Resort café.

design-spirits.com



Photos FG + SG

Bar Jardim 9 de Abril

Maintaining the existing – very beautiful – view is Aspa Arquitectos' aim in designing this rooftop bar and terrace in Lisbon. The single-storey glass structure and surrounding terrace allow the space to melt into its public environment.

asparquitectos.com

Hilton Pattaya Lobby and Bar

On the 17th floor, the serene space of the Hilton Pattaya's lobby and bar, by Department of Architecture, is dominated by a rippling fabric installation that evokes the pool outside, as well as the sea and sand of the beach below.

departmentofarchitecture.co.th



Photo Pedro Pegena

The Waterhouse at South Bund

In transforming a disused military building into a boutique hotel – thus salvaging an almost forgotten historical space from China's rapidly advancing development – Neri & Hu interprets luxury in an unprecedented way.

nhd.com

Serve & Facilitate

Public spaces, venues, services

Winner



An art installation can double as a toilet

Photos Jeroen Musch

Power Toilets

A nondescript grey box on a beach in Heerhugowaard contains public toilets modelled on those used by members of the United Nations Security Council in New York, as reconstructed from smuggled mobile-phone images by Nezu Aymo Architects and Superflex. Praising the project's dual identity, the jury calls it 'a contemporary art installation that doubles as a functional toilet'.

nezuaymo.com



ORIGINAL PHOTOS FROM THE UN BUILDING IN NEW YORK

Runners Up



Photo Kristof Lemp

SimINN Flight Simulation Centre

Boris Banozic's dynamic design graphically reproduces the parts of the aircraft not experienced tangibly by customers enjoying the virtual flight of a Boeing 747. The interior playfully completes the experience offered by the simulator.

banozic.com

Wellington Airport International Passenger Terminal

Studio Pacific and Warren and Mahoney depart from anticipated airport blandness and overused metaphors of flight. The Rock's dramatically craggy structure shelters an intimate, cave-like interior, providing a public space with a sense of privacy.

studiopacific.co.nz
warrenandmahoney.com



Photo Patrick Reynolds

Nakamura Station

Dissolving the boundary between the waiting room and the platform is Nextstations' solution to the problem of an isolated and underused train station in Shimanto. Modest but momentous interventions give the space a vibrant new lease of life.

nextstations.com

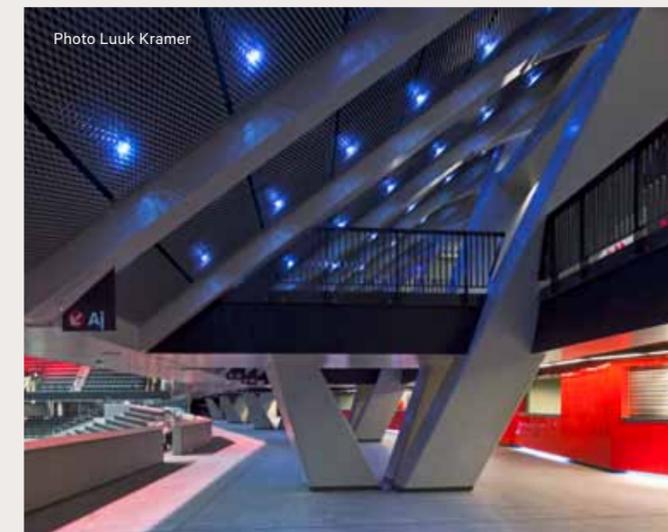


Photo Luuk Kramer

Ahoy

Working with Zwarts & Jansma Architects, Merckx + Girod breathes new life into Rotterdam's Ahoy arena by stripping it back to essentials. The building is re-created as a wholly architectural experience that improves the quality of public space.

merckx-girod.nl



Show & Sell

Shops, shows, pop-ups

Winner



Three stores result from one powerful idea

Aēsop

Using simple materials to inventive effect, March Studio achieves three surprisingly different interiors in a trio of Aēsop stores (two in Paris and one in Melbourne). The jury sees the three stores 'almost as a logical consequence of one powerful concept: the creation of a graphically developed space involving one natural material, one technique and the seamless incorporation of the product line'.

marchstudio.com.au



Runners Up



Galleria Centercity

'If museums are turning into supermarkets, why should department stores not turn into museums?' Ben van Berkel explains the rationale behind the design of UNStudio's Galleria Centercity, a department store in Cheonan, South Korea, where retail space is reclaimed as public space.

unstudio.com



Techtile #3

To make Techtile #3, an installation for Tokyo's Gallery K, Nosigner uses aluminium foil to capture over 200 different 'textures' (from police badges to piano keys) collected throughout the city. Normally invisible textures become temporarily tangible.

nosigner.com

Hermès Rive Gauche

A 1930s swimming pool is an unlikely setting for a luxury store like Hermès, but RDAI works the Art-Deco space by echoing its watery themes, reclaiming a forgotten part of the city. The project reflects the jury's 'unspoken preference' for reuse.

renadumas.com



Photo Michel Denance

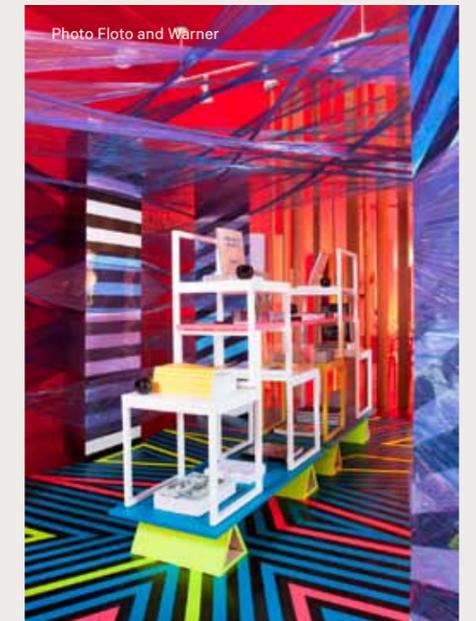


Photo Floto and Warner

Ohwow at Cappellini

A graphic solution from Rafael de Cárdenas lifts a diminutive Christmas pop-up to a level incommensurate with its tiny size – and shows how a temporary interior can inject new energy (and fun) into an existing environment.

architectureatlarge.com