EMERGING ARCHITECTURE

This year's AR Awards programme yielded its customary crop of invention, sensitivity and optimism.

This is the eighth annual cycle of the AR Awards for Emerging Architecture. Since 1999, the programme has celebrated and nurtured the talent of an emerging generation of architects from all over the world, and in so doing, it has helped to accelerate the pace of work by younger practitioners and ensured their mark in professional practice. A crucial aspect of the Awards appeal is its extraordinary and unvarnished geographical diversity. This year's finalists were selected from 25 countries and new countries 'emerging' included Nepal, Kuwait and the Dominican Republic. Winning designs are spread over a remarkable range of locations, from the remote Great Sandy Desert in Australia to a Copenhagen beach and a Thai resort. Other prominent projects come from Japan, Bangladesh, Brazil and Norway, among others.

As always, the jury also reflected a lively mixture of nationalities. chaired by AR editor Paul Finch, it comprised Benedetta Tagliabue of EMBT Architects in Spain; Christine Wormrawn of Swiss practice Hering & De Muncer, Mark Dytham of Krier Dytham in Hong Kong; Shigeru Ban; Kim Verner of Danish firm NORM; and former AR editor Pier David Anselmi (an extremely well travelled Yorkshireman). The finality of the jury's conclusions rested much in different experiences and world views, but all were agreed on the importance of certain unshakeable assessment criteria: architectural, environmental and social responsibilities, complementarities to place and appropriate use of materials and technologies. Projects had to demonstrate a clear commitment to improving human life and should not merely be processor with form and the simplistic notion of architecture as an autonomous art.

Before we consider the winners, a quick word from our sponsors who, like the jury, are an enlightened international outfit. This year’s awards for a residential care unit for mental health patients and the other with activating and sustaining a celebratory and public approach to learning in a marginalised community. Both are examples of architecture as a means to programme, budget and facilitate to connect more deeply with the human condition.

The third winner, an earth-moving bridge across Lake Austin in Texas by Bob Kerner, was the other project that, like most of the others, was about the power of poetic structure and more with nature. This approach—expressive and purposeful but with a sense of distinct and functional integrity—found an echo in other projects, such as a dramatic viewing platform in a Norwegian forest by Snorre Stinessen and Matteo Thun and the remarkable Windchime by Architecten (PIA), an elaborate tensile construction that follows lightly above the rooftops of a London office.

For obvious reasons, it is usually harder for younger architects to get the chance to tackle projects of substantial scale. So it was particularly pleasing when projects could be seen to have progressed beyond the familiar inventory of offices, houses and small bars which, though delightful, tend to define submissions. Scenarios such as Euis An's new apartment building in Harlem, Turkey's third largest airport (PIA), and a new headquarters and showroom for Dolce & Gabanna in Milano (PIA) were appropriately ambitious in scale and context in execution. Both showed these young designers more than capable of thinking through the requirements for very large, complex projects.

However, this was not to derogate the ingenuity of the house that caught the jury's eye. Proof that the small private residence is still an important model for experimentation and the consolidation of ideas. Japan still a rich source of invention in this regard. Taka Noguchi's House (PIA) is an innovative masterpiece. The new Loco Architects explore the potential of remote earthy materials. This project is a purest, purest, sustainable dwelling (PIA). Closer to home in Dublin, Boyd Cody's addition to the end of a historic terrace was a skilled and thoughtful response to a difficult brief.

Larger residential projects were also well represented withVOHA Architects' apartments and mixed-use block (PIA), a dense, complex interpretation of Singapore's traditional shophouses — and the Mandai's (also recently explored in Noto Yumakat's) flower shop ingeniously slotted into a car park in Osaka (PIA)? and

Nagoya's bold conception of a Candle Bridge submerged in the Peninsular War (PIA). But perhaps the most intriguing of these was the Topographic Asmussen project in Bev Horison by Yras S/A (PIA), in which the concrete underpinnings of the city's buildings are transformed into modern hanging gardens and performance spaces.

This sense of creative vision found resonance in other public projects, such as the new concert hall in Kuala Lumpur by White Architecture (PIA), a generously conceived, free facility to encourage community recreation, and the Fredric Federico School's community centre for the Wadjumari people on the edge of Australia's Great Sandy Desert, which addressed challenging issues of social and environmental responsibility (PIA). And in the Jockey Club's new University of Arts, Architecture and Design, in Hong Kong, the Nagata, Marco Galvani and Giancarlo Rca sensitively reinterpreted the traditions of the Catholic incursions to create a dignified extension to an existing concrete.

Pushing boundaries
On material and structural experiments with materials yielded some intriguing results and showed architects fashionably pushing technical boundaries. Martin Eitfall and Euskirchen's L'Abbaye project (PIA) employs steel and fabric to form an acoustically seamless cover over Kano Motó's (also recently explored in Noto Yumakat's) flower shop ingeniously slotted into a car park in Osaka (PIA)? and

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Concern for community
Of the three winning schemes, two were basically concerned with community, one for the treatment of disturbed young people in Hongkong by Sae Fumiguo Architects, and the other in Bangladesh, by Anna Herking and Kai Rosing. But the differences in context and the ways they serve, from prosperous, modern Japan to impoverished, underdeveloped Bangladesh, could not be greater. Though the architecture responded accordingly, the Hong Kong project is a sophisticated exercise in geometrical disposition in order to maintain the minimum of personal space, the Bangladesh school an admirable and inventive example of how to combine robust, simple technology with local traditions of making and building in ways that are two sides of the same coin. One is concerned with healing in an institutional context (Sae Fumiguo was premiered in last year's awards for a residential care unit for mental health patients) and the other with activating and sustaining a celebratory and public approach to learning in a marginalised community. Both are examples of architecture as a means to programme, budget and facilitate to connect more deeply with the human condition.

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All too often, aspirations towards modernity in developing countries have malign economic and cultural effects where construction is concerned. Traditional materials and techniques are abandoned in favour of the import of expensive and sometimes energy-inefficient materials and products, benefiting only manufacturers in more advanced economies. The outcome can at worst be the imposition of alien buildings, forms and materials which don't last long and are difficult to maintain. Their only merit is to look new for a time. By contrast, this joyful project, in a poor rural area of Bangladesh (said to be the world’s most densely populated country), shows that new and retaining local identity can be achieved by exploring the immediate and the readily available – ironically via architects from Europe.

This school is built using brick, lime, straw, bamboo and rope, plus some steel pins. Refining the local technique of using very wet lime to build walls, the school has a brick foundation, a damp proof course, and walls made of a mixture of lime and straw, the latter acting as a form of reinforcement. The brick and straw are combined by getting cows and water buffaloes to tread them in. The ‘wellbore’ technique employed here involves building a 700mm-high wall layer, leaving it to dry for two days, and sectioning off with a spade. A further drying period is followed by the action of the next layer.

The ceiling and first floor are constructed using bamboo as the chief material. Three layers of bamboo sticks, bamboo boards

MATERIALS
- 600 mm brickwork for foundations and verandas
- 250 mm lime for walls, ceiling, and floor
- 2,000 bamboo poles for ceiling, roof and facade
- 1,000 bamboo slats for facade

TOOLS
- ‘Wellbore’ mallet
- 2 pickaxes
- 1 drill machine
- 4 ladders
- 4 ladders
- 20 canes
- 2 water buffalosection<br>

EARTH WORKS
Simple materials and local skills inform a life-enhancing rural architecture.

PRIZEWINNER
HANDMADE SCHOOL, RUORAPUR, BANGLADESH
ARCHITECT: ANNA HERINGER, EIKE ROSWAG

The colourful east facade.

The workforce was made up of local labourers, cows and water buffaloes.

Innovative architecture using traditional materials.
and an earth-filling make the surface of the floor. The upper walls and roof comprise a frame construction using four layers of joined bamboo strips, and vertical and diagonal poles, steel pins are fixed with nylon lashing from the junction of the sticks (a modified form of traditional local lashing was used).

The inventive architecture, allied to traditional materials, has attracted thousands of visitors to the building, which is elegant, spacious, and colourful. The architects sum it up this: “Comfort, durability and style as lesser – sustainability as concept.” It is the only two-storey building in the neighbourhood, and the architects hope that the principles that inform the school design may be replicated in relation to housing development, escaping the apparent tyranny of the earth’s task. The judges felt this project more than lived up to its aims and ambitions, and that the thorough analysis which underlies the design has been matched by the quality of architecture achieved. PAUL FRICH

Architects
Anna Heringer; Elke Roswig. Berlin Photographs
Kurt Mardel.

Children take place as the floor. Light must not enter from
Children enjoy the clap play area.