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Nomination report

The international jury, consisting of Jo Coenen, architect (NL), Dirk van den Heuvel, theoretician (NL), Anne Højgaard Jørgensen, Kvadrat head of design (DK), Anniina Koivu, design editor for *Abitare* magazine (IT), Joep van Lieshout, artist (NL), Giulio Ridolfo, colour specialist (IT) and chairmen Guus Beumer (director of the Marres centre for contemporary culture and *NaiM/Bureau Europa*) and Robert Thiemann (editor-in-chief, *FRAME* magazine), met on 23 October. The role of the chairpersons was explicitly defined as facilitative. Their task was to conduct the selection process as efficiently as possible. The ultimate choice was that of the jury members and not the chairmen.

The jury faced a difficult task, in that over 380 applicants from 40 countries had registered for the second edition of *The Great Indoors Award 2009*, a remarkable number considering the current economic crisis.

The initiators of *The Great Indoors* (*FRAME* magazine, Marres centre for contemporary culture and *NaiM/Bureau Europa*) framed the previous edition of the award as a look at the interior as our final utopia, a utopia that has since gone on to make its impact felt in the public space.

This year, the organisation introduced the aspect of “Changing Ideals,” based on *NaiM/Bureau Europa*’s exhibition of the same name. This concept is based on the assumption that changing ideals in society have direct repercussions on the interior. The organisation firmly believes that the current economic crisis would affect the jury’s perspective, including on the submissions produced before the crisis.

The jury met at 8.30 a.m. to consider the choice of five nominees per category and five winners. The jury was motivated by the confrontation with the full magnitude of all submissions, allowing them to come face-to-face with both internationally famous names and undiscovered talent.

After a first run-through of the total group of submissions, the jury decided to look for any guiding principles that could be identified across all submissions. Very quickly, it became clear that there was no way to formulate an overriding perspective. Although certain premises such as sustainability, recycling, temporality and the longing for public space, recur in each and every submission, an all-encompassing order within them was difficult to formulate; indeed, to formulate one would have been a disservice to the diversity of submissions.

The impossibility of looking at the group of submissions from a shared perspective surprised some of the jury. More than once, jury members wondered whether they might be missing something, whether the assignment of the commission, the functionality or the budget encompassed a dominant reality that obscured more external and societal considerations. In the end, and after having surveyed all classifications, the jury returned to the conclusion that the organisation’s desire to reflect the idea of *Changing Ideals* in the submitters’ material was an understandable goal, but that the key ultimately lay in the individual position of each project.

Despite this, were there any remarks of a more general nature to be made? Even more than in the first edition, the jury was very impressed by the quality of the submissions. There was virtually no elimination of submissions on the basis of a quality threshold. Each project, whether by an unknown designer from a new economy or a famous name hailing from a world design centre, presented the jury with an interesting position that could be compared against the others on an equal footing.

A discussion of a fundamental nature that did arise, despite the diversity in the submissions, was the discussion about architecture as opposed to interior architecture. Some members of the jury had an integrated vision of architecture, comprising both the shell/construction and the interior, while others saw the addition of the interior architect as distinctive from the architect, and considered that this was a vision of

the interior that the award should express. Faced with the fundamental nature of this discussion, the jury decided to approach this issue, in all its specificity, individually for each project.

This jury was not per se interested in the visual vocabulary of a project, but considered very carefully the spatial quality behind the image. The most complex question for the jury was the issue of the specific cultural context from which the project came. In most cases, the jury had to rely on the text provided on the background of the project. Where that specific cultural quality could be abstracted, and could be compared with other projects on that basis, the jury opted to include this aspect in their considerations.

Of the four categories in addition to Design Firm of the Year, “Show & Sell” and “Relax & Consume” principally represent the commercial reality of architecture and issues that are inextricably associated with it, such as identity, branding and luxury. The other two, “Concentrate & Collaborate” and “Serve & Facilitate,” are, by contrast, associated with public issues and the social ambition behind them. Along the same lines, issues such as participation and collectivism also come into play.

Serve & Facilitate

PROJEKTIL + HIPPOS + PAS + LABORATORY (CZ)

NATIONAL TECHNICAL LIBRARY, PRAGUE 2009

This building represents not only a specific design, but a European tradition. In this library, the jury sees the inclination not to approach public space under labels of multifunctionality, but to attach substantial budgets to specific solutions. The jury was impressed by the nuanced spatial development and the way of defining location by colour, materialisation, unique furniture design and graphic accents, both belying the large scale of the design. The jury appreciates the refinement at every level of scale, and sees this as a result of the intensive forms of collaboration between architects, interior designers, artists and graphic designers that produced the distinguished quality of this project.

I29 INTERIOR ARCHITECTS & SNELDER ARCHITECTS (NL)

POETRY IN MOTION, AMSTELVEEN 2009

After years of disqualification based on typology, suddenly the school seems to be once again the focal point of interest of architects and interior designers. The level of interest has led to an interior architecture that revisits the interface of optimum education and an optimal spatial environment. The jury was deeply impressed by this project by i29 Interior Architects and Snelder Architects, in which they see an extraordinarily mature touch that articulates a variety of spaces in a remarkably focused way. But at the same time, the interior manoeuvres used in this project demonstrated a focused specificity in both the unique furniture designs and the service of the school's educational mission. The jury appreciates the way in which every aspect of the interior design was approached to produce a clear image vocabulary.

HAUNTING DOGS FULL OF GRACE (NL)

ENTRANCE AREA BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN, ROTTERDAM 2008

Haunting Dogs Full of Grace is a specially brought together collective of Dutch designers, joining forces for the entrance area of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. The jury long considered the question of whether this could really be considered an interior design, or whether the space should be interpreted primarily as a composite of incidents. Nonetheless, the jury was struck by the specificity that each designer succeeded in bestowing on an element of the design commission. An interesting aspect for the jury was that this interior embraces a middle ground in which product design and interior design became ends of a smoothly flowing scale.

From the ritual nature of the cloakroom to the more functional arrangement of the shop, the fairy-tale quality of the educational centre to the entrance counter and its toying with the idea of branding, each and every element makes a contribution to the idea of the interior as an encyclopaedia of perspectives.

MUUNGANO (SE)

BOOKBUS, KIRUNA 2008

This was another submission that confronted the jury with the question of whether the project should be interpreted as an interior with a spatial quality. After long discussions of a more formal nature, in which the interior was to some extent criticised and seen primarily as an exercise in style, dominated by the 1960s and 70s, the jury made the decision to nominate this project. The jury was entirely taken with the social quality of this interior, and the nomination of this submission is meant to make an explicit statement that the interior is not only subject to formal and aesthetic criteria, but social criteria as well. This project is seen as a modest but important contribution to the idea of community and culture dissemination, for which this simple but effective interior is a perfect means.

BUREAU IRA KOERS & STUDIO ROELOF MULDER (NL)

LIBRARY FOR UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM, AMSTERDAM 2009

Another joint venture, this time between an architect and a graphic designer. This submission also addresses the issue of temporality. Quite a number of projects address this issue, which is virtually inescapably linked to the interior, because the interior is often intended to be a reflection of the time. In this specific case, temporality is linked to abstraction, which, in the eyes of the jury, elevates this library from purely functional questions and ties the contemplative design to more mental criteria such as the transfer of knowledge, something directly connected with the function of a library. The fact that these designers were capable of communicating such an abstraction in a project that was no doubt subject to limited budgets makes this project a very good candidate.

Relax & Consume

NILS HOLGER MOORMANN (D)

BERGE GUESTHOUSE, ACHAU IM CHIEMGAU 2008

The term “charming” is prone to being used in a somewhat condescending manner. But for this project, it is entirely appropriate. This interior shows first and foremost the ambition of a designer and his need to operate from within a tradition. The craftsmanship, the allusions to the local and the restrained, artistic tone of the interior are all illustrative of an interior that fully embraces the idea of the genius loci. In this project, the jury sees a rejection of the interior as a pure global language, subject to far-reaching dynamisation.

WIEL ARETS ARCHITECTS (NL)

HOTEL ZENDEN, MAASTRICHT 2009

The scale of Hotel Zenden is modest, but it is perhaps this scale that led to the refinement of the design. The minimalistic control of this hotel and gym demands a hyper-awareness of every choice made. This interior illustrates the maxim that “God is in the details.” The jury appreciates the effort in using every means to attach a sculptural quality on the historic space, especially because the project was a renovation.

MARCEL WANDERS (NL)

MONDRIAN SOUTH BEACH, MIAMI 2008

The interior of the Mondrian South Beach Hotel presented the jury with a new aesthetic category. The profound artificiality presented in the photographs was the subject of much discussion. Here was a designer operating at the peak of his skills and with a budget allowing for the pursuit of any idea of matchless perfection. Issues of identity and branding combine with Hollywood glamour and over-the-top theatrics. This project is a nomination as unique as it is inevitable.

KJELLGREN KAMINSKY ARCHITECTURE AB (SE)

MIRAGE, FALSTERBO 2009

The project Mirage is not so much a phantom, but a phoenix. The Mirage was rebuilt on the coast after a devastating fire that burned the original Falsterbo dance hall to the ground. The jury was particularly impressed by the attempt made to integrate the location, history and possible future into the design.

This project evidenced a deeply sensitive understanding of community that had to be expressed in both the architecture of the building and the interior. The jury was particularly impressed by the graphic quality, and saw the sharp definitions of the facades and walls as revisiting the 1950s, not as a post-modern allusion of style but as a critical examination from a modernistic tradition.

DESIGN SPIRITS CO., LTD. (JP)

BEIJING NOODLE NO. 09, LAS VEGAS 2008

Beijing Noodle no. 09 is one of the many restaurants in Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, a hotel where the goal is to answer the guests' every need, so they never have to set foot outside. Caesars Palace represents the interior as a universe. When a designer is asked to create a noodle restaurant here, it must both appeal to the largest possible group, and so present a form of democratic design, but at the same time succeed in bringing the idea of interior as entertainment to a new height. This interior is the perfect answer, but yet is paradoxical; on the one hand it borders on outrageous kitsch, but at the same time, possesses a certain abstraction. The shining surfaces, the fact that every element is defined, presents an excess of impressions. And then, all these ingredients suddenly transcend what they are intended to project: shine becomes reflection, wall becomes water, colour dissolves, and even the cliché of the goldfish is transformed by the excess into a curtain of movement.

Show & Sell

GUISE (SE)

FIFTH AVENUE SHOE REPAIR, STOCKHOLM 2009

Stores, and fashion stores in particular, have in recent years developed into emblematic spaces that, relying in part on unlimited budgets, must represent not only the identity of a brand but the unbridled creativity of the interior architecture.

This submission, for a Swedish fashion label, appeals on the one hand to the idea of the "white cube," but then evokes an image as thoughtful as it is refined, through the use of sharp graphic outlining and distinct silhouettes. The jury was struck by this crystalline design, and in this interior sees a move away from the "total transformation" towards a vocabulary of individual, sculptural elements.

JURGEN MAYER H. ARCHITECTS (D)

LEVEL GREEN, WOLFSBURG 2009

Exhibit models operate on multiple levels, but it is the idea of knowledge transfer that is typically the fundamental basis for any exhibit design. At first glance, this design seems to refer to the fluid aesthetic of the computer, but upon a closer look this cannot be a purely formal, technology-based image vocabulary. The recycling logo is, firstly, used as a premise for this architectonic model, and is then transformed again and again, to serve as a carrier for an integrated system comprising all technical conditions in one seamless whole. The jury chose this exhibit design for nomination because model, carrier and content are included within a single system, producing a layered experience.

NOSIGNER (JP)

TECHTILE 2007, TOKYO

This exhibit design surprised the jury in that it consists of only one manoeuvre, by which the material (wrapping foil) is used for both the floors and the walls. As a result, the wrapping foil is transformed from a purely functional instrument to a material with a mysterious aesthetic quality. By lowering the temperature of the exhibition space and introducing sound, the visitor gains a new awareness of this everyday material. The jury nominated this submission because it demonstrates that a minimal budget can lead to a convincing gesture and the use of a known material in an unknown context can evoke a new significance.

OFFICE FOR METROPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE - OMA (NL)
PRADA TRANSFORMER, SEOUL 2009

Every discussion about the relationship between OMA and Prada is about globalisation, power and the dominance of brands within the system of fashion. And this project is also illustrative of the succession of points for discussion. The jury nominated this project because it is this cooperation that represents all of the above, but at the same time, makes a radical statement about the architecture-interior relationship. This design has its roots in the Russian constructivism of the early 20th century, with architects such as El Lissitzky, Tatlin and Melnikov. The jury long considered the question of whether the language of the Russian Revolution can be interpreted as a means for an international fashion brand, and if so, how. Can this startling result be evaluated independently of that historical context? Ultimately, the jury was unanimous in its appreciation for this project, both in its provocative quality and for the idea of transformation of an interior that here takes on such a specific, physical quality.

PANORAMA (CN)
DJS, HONG KONG 2008

Opulence and decadence are, by definition, qualities associated with a jeweller. From the first look, the jury was fascinated by this interpretation of the concept of luxury. The jury found this exaggerated enlargement, most pronounced at the level of materialisation, quite irresistible. It is, however, its combination with a ruthless perfection that produces royal retail experience for a brand that, interestingly enough, operates in the mid-market segment.

Concentrate & Collaborate

Within the jury, this submission kicked off one of the most commonly repeated discussions: architecture versus interior architecture. As already referred to in the introduction, this discussion was revisited with each submission. In this case, the jury found that the result was worth a nomination, because the fundamental principles of this design followed on in a direct line from a classical approach to the office interior. Here we have a new attempt to see the office as a limitless space with fluid transitions, that not only projects an image of transparency, but attempts to materialise the idea of an interwoven community. The jury also appreciated the effort made to, in addition to the aesthetics and organisation, improve the working conditions with the aid of sustainable technologies, especially in consideration of the scale of the building.

ALRIK KOUDENBURG DESIGN DIRECTOR (NL)
CARDBOARD OFFICE INTERIOR, AMSTERDAM 2009

This design does not so much have a specific spatial concept, rather derives its quality from the connection of its components. The jury was charmed by this approach, and saw a new hybrid of interior and product design emerging. At the same time, the jury enjoyed the materiality and system behind it. It is an office interior made up of cardboard used, without screw or glue, for furniture, break room, management offices, bookcases and storage space.

I29 INTERIOR ARCHITECTS (NL)

RECYCLED OFFICE, AMSTERDAM 2009

Temporality and sustainability are concepts difficult to reconcile. This is an observation that certainly holds true for the interior, and raises an important question for the future, given that many interiors do not last longer than five years. This design for a temporary office seems to have formulated an answer to the call for identity and the demand for sustainability. With this simple manoeuvre, by which all individual elements are connected by the colour black and a simple zoning system, I29 Interior Architects formulates an intriguing answer to this demand, and presents an outstanding case study.

MVRDV & RICHARD HUTTEN (NL)

THE WHY FACTORY TRIBUNE, DELFT 2009

The fire at TU Delft required a fast and innovative response to the need for a new faculty. The jury regrets that this was not submitted for The Great Indoors as a total scenario. This submission by MVRDV is a specific component of the complex renovation scenario; the manoeuvre in a former inner courtyard of an existing building. This project is a joint venture between MVRDV and Richard Hutten, by which MVRDV handled the manoeuvre in the public gallery and Richard Hutten handled the design of the tables.

The jury appreciates the effectiveness of the manoeuvre adding definition to an intermediate space and making multiple use possible. This Mayan temple is a wonderful contrast to the almost bare quality of the space.

STUDIO O+A (USA)

FACEBOOK HEADQUARTERS, PALO ALTO CALIFORNIA 2009

Like the other submissions, the Facebook main offices present the jury with a new approach to the design of office space. It is clear that an organisation like Facebook is trying to project the idea of community all the way into its own headquarters. By leaving space in this renovation for all the various components of the organisation and integrating their former interior, the designers showed their sensitivity to the client's history. By also making the staff co-authors of the interior, Studio o+a created an exemplary vision of community. The fact that the design also makes intensive use of standard solutions and achieves maximum efficiency. The integration of existing architectonic details, research into energy-efficient lighting systems and the use of recycled materials for the floors demonstrate the sense of social responsibility on the part of the designers and the organisation.

Design Firm of the Year

The jury made a deliberate decision to not interpret the nominations for Design Firm of the Year as a “lifetime achievement” award, but to select the nominees from young firms that, in the eyes of the jury, have presented a new perspective on interior design this year. Here, too, the choices go to firms that take a specific and convincing position.

GUISE (SE)

The Swedish firm Guise is one of those young firms that combines a distinctive method and a modest budget in its projects. The jury was particularly sold on the firm’s clear design methodology and quality in graphics, and sees in this underlying design concept a future scenario in which simple ingredients are effective identity carriers that also maximise functionality.

MARCH STUDIO (AU)

March Studio has only been around for two years, but in this short time it has already built up a name for itself with a few high-profile projects. March Studio combines a certain theatricality with an inventive style and enriches the interior architecture through their understanding of the interior as temporary decor.

I29 INTERIOR ARCHITECTS (NL)

The fact that this firm has been nominated twice before, in the categories Concentrate & Collaborate and Serve & Facilitate, illustrates the convincing power of the projects of i29 Interior Architects. In the jury’s eyes, this firm shows how capable it is of linking architectonic components with intensive studies of surfaces that gain maximum impact through the use of a colour or typography. This firm represents a method in which architecture and interior architecture come together in a model combination.

MAURICE MENTJENS (NL)

For the second time, the firm of Maurice Mentjens succeeds in earning a nomination for Design Firm of the Year. In his approach to textures and colour, Mentjens succeeds in capturing the spirit of the now in an innovative way. The jury appreciates how Mentjens is able to create a total scenario using just a few defining manoeuvres. This “light touch” methodology is something the jury sees as an innovative response to the extreme makeovers of recent years.

STUDIO MAKKINK & BEY (NL)

While one firm succeeds in combining architecture and stylism, and another builds up an interior from layered textures, Studio Makkink & Bey succeed in uniting product design and architecture in a non-hierarchical way. An architectonic scale model is an end product, as in the Droog Design store in New York, and a map becomes a meaningful skin, as in the overall design for a presentation in Milan. The jury was sold on the richness of resources that this firm can call upon, such as re-use, craftsmanship and co-authorship.