

DESIGN AWARDS 2021



DESIGN/GLOBAL

Making good

Our first ever Design Awards are here, honouring the year's 50 most thoughtfully made objects and buildings.

Design Awards

Weeks of conversations with our correspondents across the globe and hours of interviewing designers from Stockholm to Seoul have resulted in the inaugural Monocle Design Awards. We've enlisted our international photographers and journalists to tell these stories but it's the world-class body of work that is the real hero. Having spent the past 14 years profiling the globe's most interesting architects, urban planners, graphic designers, creative consultants and furniture-makers, we felt that it was time to recognise this talent more formally.

MONOCLE's focus has always been on telling stories about improving quality of life and creating more liveable cities. These awards pay tribute to this approach and highlight how enjoyable and useful good design is in enhancing our lives.

Now settle into your most beautifully crafted chair and prepare to learn about 50 designs that will make your life much better. — NSG

1

BEST TEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

The Braunstein Taphouse Denmark

That temporary architecture tends to be tasteless makes sense: why put effort into a design that will be demolished in a few years?

The answer lies in the Braunstein Taphouse on the harbour of the town of Koege, which is almost too good-looking to be taken apart.

Composed largely of timber, the establishment contains a microbrewery, a café and event spaces, and is designed by Danish architecture firm Adept with a smart consideration of the building's limited lifespan. "We have worked with the principle of 'design for disassembly'," says Anders Lonka, founding partner at Adept. "It is constructed with



only mechanical joints and no paintwork." It has already become important to the community, while familiarising people with an area that soon will be developed into a new destination for the town. — ASG adept.dk



D
Design Awards

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BEST COMPACT CAMERA KIT

D-Lux 7 Street Kit
Germany

Pros might chastise us for saying this but when it comes to taking photographs – for many of us – looking good in the process is all part of the art.

This is one of multiple reasons why squinting from the sun into our smartphones as we try to capture the architectural wonders of our cities is not MONOCLE's preferred method of taking good photos. Thankfully, German camera giant Leica has just released an appropriate solution. To match its sleek

and top-performing D-Lux 7 camera (which comes in this bundle), Leica's D-Lux 7 Street Kit offers a stylish handgrip, an auto lens cap, a black paracord wrist strap and an extra battery. Sure, it all performs beautifully but damn if it doesn't look good too. — NSG
leica-camera.com



3

BEST BRAND REFRESH

Yamato Holdings
Japan

For Japanese people, the mere glimpse of the *kuro neko* (“black cat”) logo unflinchingly translates into images of Yamato Transport trucks and its army of delivery staff. After all, the logo has been seen across the country on uniforms and vehicles since it was designed in 1957. Updating one of the nation's most iconic brands, therefore,

is no small task. But this 2021 renewal courtesy of master graphic designer Kenya Hara is smart and subtle – a testament to our feeling that strong branding doesn't necessarily have to be loud.

Following the makeover of staff uniforms last autumn, this spring the Japanese logistics giant updated its corporate logo. “I made sure that the scene of a cat carrying a kitten is still instantly recognisable,” says Hara, who refined the details of the form without breaking the meaning of the symbol. “It's

an environmental design too, so I chose a harmonious colour scheme,” he adds. Indeed, Yamato's fleet of nearly 57,000 trucks has to zip across the length of the country sporting this new identity without disturbing the landscape – whether it be in the city or the countryside. So a subtle shade of grey was deployed as a backdrop for Hara's punchy yellow-and-black logo on vehicles with yellow and white used elsewhere. — JT
yamato-hd.co.jp



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MOST FUN DESIGN

Beams × Ziploc Umbrella
Japan

Rainy days, like most things, can be remedied with good design. Japanese retailer Beams and US household brand Ziploc have collaborated on an umbrella made from recycled Ziploc products, including its resealable lunch bags. It's nice to know that one material can keep both you and your sandwich dry. — ASG
beams.co.jp



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DESIGN CEO OF THE YEAR

Knud Erik Hansen
Denmark

At the age of 70, Knud Erik Hansen is setting the standard for running a successful design business and his slew of recent industry wins made him a clear favourite for our CEO of the year award. At the helm of Danish furniture firm Carl Hansen & Søn, he's spearheaded the company's rocketing growth for the better part of 20 years. And, among other things, he's done it thanks to the championing of his nation's age-old carpentry tradition: keeping production a stone's throw from where his grandfather started the company more than a century ago and relying on wood sourced from nearby forests. Through sustainable manufacturing and sourcing materials of the highest quality available, Hansen is demonstrating to furniture brands that it's possible to make a mark and become successful, while staying true to the things you care about, as he tells MONOCLE. — GDE

Your company has been growing consistently. What do you attribute your success to?

In 2020 we experienced the kind of growth we'd usually see spread over seven years. It was unbelievable. In 2002, when I took over, we employed 20 people and we are now more than 400. It has to do with consistency: we don't compromise, we don't move production out of the country and we only use nature's products – well-treated and sustainable wood.

Your grandfather started the company to produce furniture of great quality. What does that entail a century later?

Things haven't changed much. Maybe we added a few machines here and there. But the idea of good carpentry remains the same. Furniture should be produced the way it was designed – using the best wood and putting pieces together in the right way – by people who have deep knowledge of how to work with the material.

You are still crafting furniture in Denmark. Any plans to move production abroad?

No. The carpentry skills in Denmark that go back centuries have made people enjoy design and craftsmanship, and they feel honoured in extending the legacy. Most of our carpenters come from within Denmark and we don't want to change that.

Any exciting new releases in the pipeline?

Yes. We're collaborating with designers in Denmark and abroad. And we're doubling the number of releases that we produce compared to a few years ago, which is almost overwhelming.

What do you see happening within the company in the next three years?

If there is one thing I am sure of, it is that we will have to expand our production facility – even though we just did. I'm afraid that we are running out of space again. And we are expanding right here, in Denmark. We are not moving anywhere.
carlhansen.com



PHOTOGRAPHER: Rasmus Weng Karlsen. STILL LIFE: Jonas Marquet

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**BEST PROPOSED
DESIGN**
**'Rational
Simplicity'**
USA

A gem of modernist design has found a new audience with the help of a crowdfunding effort to publish this handsome Rudolph de Harak monograph, *Rational Simplicity*. The project, written and designed by former De Harak studio partner Richard Poulin, analyses the work of De Harak, whose 1950s album art and paperback covers combined modernist ideas about simplicity with more abstract geometric designs. The coffee-table book, now published by Thames & Hudson, is likely to be released early next year after a successful awareness campaign. — NSG vol.co



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BEST MASCOT REVIVAL
Oriental Brewery
South Korea

The reinvention of this 69-year-old South Korean brand riffs on Seoul's "newtro" (new retro) trend. OB asked Sunny Studio to revive a mascot of the company's now-defunct baseball team, Lala Bear. Lala proved so popular that a fashion collaboration with Guess and a set of emojis followed. A familiar face to goad us toward another drink? Genius. — HY sunnystudio.kr



STILL LIFE: Jonas Marguet. IMAGES: Charly Broeyer



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**SMARTEST RESIDENTIAL
BUILDING**
14 Accommodations
France

Tucked in the courtyard of a 1970s apartment block, the breathtaking design for this residential building in the 12th arrondissement of Paris evolved from pure necessity. "We needed to fit all construction elements through an opening only 2.3 metres wide," says Raphaël Renard of French firm Mars Architectes. "Working with timber was simply the logical solution." Fortunately so, as its masterful employment elevates this project into a class of its own. Imbued with the natural warmth of the European



Douglas fir, the apartments boast a balcony, ceiling-height windows and fine wooden flooring. Each apartment has access to an inner courtyard that helps to provide a sense of community. Laudably, the architects devoted just as much care to the surroundings, creating a haven of more than 30 regional plant species in what had previously been a barren concrete enclosure.

This regard for detail and wellbeing, frequently lacking in new builds, sent Parisians clamouring. On completion last October, rental contracts were snapped up from developer Gecina within a few days. "The feedback from the residents has been that they are delighted, so we are happy too," says Renard. Indeed, 14 Accommodations shows that, in expert hands, architecture is only enhanced by being in a tight spot. — SRO mars-architectes.com

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BEST USE OF MATERIALS
Hildebrand
Switzerland

The natural properties of wood have always made homes more idyllic places to live in. Spend a few nights enjoying Alpine hues in a Swiss timber chalet or dipping into a hinoki tub and enjoying the aroma that's generated, and you'll catch our drift. It is for this reason that we're rewarding the work of Swiss architecture firm Hildebrand, led by architect Yuichi Kodai, in this remarkable renovation of a Zürich apartment. He has carefully combined Japanese design smarts with high-end Swiss carpentry to transform an old flat into a handsome new home. Contrasted with framed *koshi* windows and hand-formed earthen walls, the effect is truly luxurious despite the humble materials. — NSG hildebrand.ch



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BEST RURAL ARCHITECTURE
The Wachthaus
Switzerland

Rural architecture should celebrate its landscape. Jonathan Tuckey Design has done just that with a new restaurant and bar in the Swiss Alps reimagined from an decommissioned military outpost.

To ground it in its location, new walls were made from reclaimed timber boards and the red-and-white designs on its external shutters are a welcoming nod to the region's wayfinding signage and traditionally painted *louvre*s too.



The result is a cosy space in which to stop for a glass of wine (when your friends think you're on a black-diamond run), or to stay overnight and enjoy your breakfast with views over Andermatt. — NM jonathantuckey.com

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BEST NEW TALENT
Nkuli Mlangeni-Berg
Sweden

To succeed in design, it's important to be locally minded and globally reaching. Young designers working out how best to do this would do well to turn to our best new talent winner, Nkuli Mlangeni-Berg. Her textile brand, The Ninevites, celebrates the power of craftsmanship to create objects of real beauty that empower corners of the world we rarely see represented in international design.

Mlangeni-Berg might be based in Stockholm but her mission is to widen the horizons of a highly Eurocentric market; something that MONOCLE believes is long overdue. The brand was born during her time at Kaospilot, Denmark's alternative business school. A research project took her to Peru to discover the nation's indigenous textile industry. In Lima she met master weaver Mario Quispe, who helped her to produce prototype designs which he wove by hand from wool sourced nearby.

Mlangeni-Berg has expanded production to her native South Africa, where she has enlisted female artisans in remote areas who weave her made-to-order rugs using lush, local mohair; the results are then shipped to customers around the world. "In South Africa a lot of indigenous craft is dying out because people are so obsessed with everything being produced at a fast pace," says Mlangeni-Berg. "I'm trying to bring awareness to it and make more people excited about passing these skills on to the next generation." — HU theninevites.com

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Simon Bagada, Lea Meinenberg, Felix Odell, STILL LIFE: Luigi Fiano, Jonas Marguet

BEST REISSUE

Round D.154.5 chair
Italy

Gio Ponti is one of few to deserve the title of "visionary". Years before we all became hooked on ready-to-assemble furniture, the Italian architect conceived the Round D.154.5 chair. It catches the eye with its aerofoil shapes and featured in many of Ponti's interior design projects. We pay tribute to Molteni&C for bringing this gem out of the archive and reissuing it for a new generation. — IC molteni.it



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MOST INNOVATIVE BUILDING COMPANY
Timbeco
Estonia

The Design Award for the most innovative building company goes to Estonia's Timbeco. The firm's new prefabrication technology has made it a world leader in constructing prefabricated wooden houses, which help to speed up construction times and are better for the environment. Timbeco's buildings – such as the terraced houses in Kabelvåg, Norway and apartment buildings in Norrköpping, Sweden (pictured) – feature stylish exteriors that help them to blend seamlessly into their natural surroundings, while the company's innovative use of wood pushes the building industry

towards a more sustainable future. "Wood is the perfect building material as it ties up CO2 from the atmosphere," says Timbeco's sales director Tõnis Vaiksaar. Let's face it, nobody wants to live next to a construction site. Timbeco is transforming the industry by shortening construction times down to just one week, compared with more traditional methods of on-site construction that often take up to a year. "This means that we disturb the neighbours less and that the building quality is higher too, given that the elements have been built in a dry and heated environment," says Vaiksaar. — PBU timbeco.ee



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BEST PACKAGING
Convenience Wear
Japan

Launched by Japanese shop chain Familymart, Convenience Wear is a line of daily essentials including underwear and handkerchiefs. "Our design direction was clear communication because the line is sold to people of all ages, nationalities and professions," says creative director Hiromichi Ochiai, who also heads fashion label Facetasm. "We kept the graphics and text to an absolute minimum," says art director Takahiro Yasuda. Enticing and practical (particularly for those who've woken up somewhere unexpected) this shows that even basics can be enhanced through clean, cool design. — JT family.co.jp



BEST PUBLIC FURNITURE

Hamntorget
Sweden

Good public furniture should entice people to linger – something that White Arkitekter has nailed with its communal table at Hamntorget.



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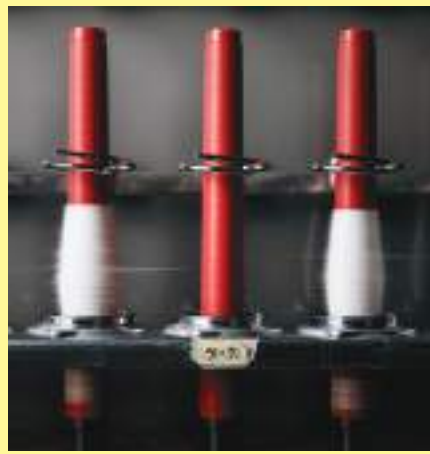
At 20 metres long, it has transformed a forgotten spot on Stockholm's Hammarby canal into a destination. MONOCLE particularly likes that the timber is finished using *shou sugi ban*, a Japanese technique in which wood is charred to waterproof it. — NM whitearkitekter.com

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BEST URBAN REVITALISATION
Chaarani Stairs
Lebanon

Residents of Tripoli will tell you of design's power to heal and reconnect communities as a result of the outstanding and moving work of Eva Studio. By using traditional, locally manufactured encaustic cement tiles, the firm brought life back to a tired set of stairs where tensions and clashes between the Lebanese community and Syrian refugees were routinely taking place.

Thanks to new public furniture, a mural and the shade of lemon trees that line the stairs, people from all walks of life now spend time here. If the Lebanese and Syrian children playing on the stairs are anything to go by, there can be no doubt that this is a world-beating revitalised space. — NM evastudio.co.uk



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BEST MATERIAL
Spinnova
Finland

Finnish textile company Spinnova's wood-based fibre is on course to transform the way that the fashion and design industries use materials. Compared with the likes of cotton or polyester, Spinnova's fibres use far less water and are much more frugal with environmental resources. MONOCLE firmly believes that sustainability should not come at the cost of a high-quality look and feel, which is why we're awarding Spinnova our inaugural award for best material.

"We work with some of the biggest brands in the fashion industry, who all say that our fibre feels similar to cotton or linen – even wool," says Spinnova's founder and CEO, Janne Poranen.

Its product is already used by the likes of Marimekko, H&M and Bergans, and Spinnova has recently announced a €50m production scale-up near its pilot factory in the Finnish town of Jyväskylä. With all this in mind, Poranen promises that the company is set to reveal a swathe of new big-name clients later this year. — PBU spinnova.com



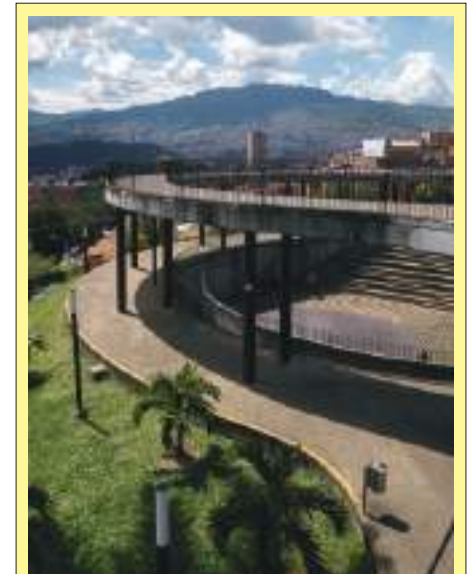
18

BEST URBAN INTERVENTION
The Underline
Miami

Using lessons learned when pioneering New York's famous High Line, landscape-architecture studio James Corner Field Operations has taken things to a new level on The Underline in Miami. It does a lot with a little, taking under-utilised land beneath the city's

elevated railway and improving quality of life in a sunny city where most residents use cars to get around.

Its outdoor gym, basketball courts and running track, as well as new bicycle and pedestrian paths, allow citizens to be more active. Whether they're limbering up for a yoga class or taking up new cycling commutes, residents of Miami will surely agree with MONOCLE that this verdant space is a top example of an urban intervention for 2021. — NM fieldoperations.net



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BEST SOCIAL EFFORT
Lafarge Holcim
France & Switzerland

French-Swiss conglomerate Lafarge Holcim is one of the world's biggest manufacturers of building materials but for the past 20 years, through an independent foundation, it has walked the walk when it comes to helping the world to build better. For managing this balancing act – adding architectural value to cities in the developing world while fighting to clean up concrete's reputation – we'd like to recognise it with our award for best social effort.

"Considering the global extent of urbanisation today, the built environment figures prominently as a leading driver of climate change,"

says Kevin Jones, who works for the company's charitable arm. Through the Lafarge Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction, the firm is pouring money (and its concrete) into projects such as UVA La Imagenación in Medellín, Colombia. Here it aided in the transformation of a decommissioned water reservoir into civic space, converting a once off-limits area into a park for cultural and sporting activities.

The sensitive intervention was led by a team of young architects from Colectivo 720, a Cali-based architecture firm founded in 2011. Its improvement of the urban fabric fostered interconnectivity between previously under-served communities and enhanced quality of life. Moreover, the project became a blueprint for a new urban-development policy focused on the recognition of good architecture and public spaces for wellbeing. — FS lafargeholcim.com



PHOTOGRAPHERS: Maria Klanner, Juan Felipe Rubio, Gast Schilling



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ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR

David Chipperfield
UK & Germany

MONOCLE's inaugural architect of the year award goes to British architect David Chipperfield, whose buildings around the world invariably exude a calm openness and a sensitivity to environment and history in both material and form. Chipperfield's aesthetic could be called sensitive and quiet. But in the case of Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie – a museum originally designed by architectural pioneer Mies van der Rohe in 1968, refurbished by Chipperfield's Berlin office and reopening this summer – it's meant to be downright silent. Chipperfield himself is not: he's become an insistent voice promoting more climate consciousness, social engagement and better urban planning in the UK and beyond. — KAB

The Neue Nationalgalerie reopens in summer. What updates might a visitor who already knows this glass-box museum notice?

In theory, the visitor shouldn't notice anything. The task was to repair the building and give it another 50 years of life, at least – to bring it back to its original state. In the process of doing that, we made several improvements: there's more technical space, for example. The casual visitor will probably not notice anything but those looking carefully will see that the building looks better than it ever did.

Like a good facelift?

Maybe. But you usually notice that! It's more a rejuvenation. It has been like restoring a 1968 Mercedes. You've done a lot to make it work better but effectively it looks extremely like the original.

You edited ten issues of Italy's 'Domus' magazine last year. What did you learn?

It gave me time to talk to colleagues. For the past 30 years, the practice of architecture has

been focused on objects, the effects of increasing land values and the market forces of the private sector. We've changed from an immediate postwar position, which was more socially focused on rebuilding society with new schools and cultural institutions. We're now slightly shocked that we find ourselves rather disengaged from political and social influence, and struggling when we have to think much more seriously about social issues. How can we scramble back some of that position from where we sit now? I'm optimistic about this. I detected a general interest and a commitment to shifting architectural practice towards these

issues. But how can we redefine our territory? We can't do this slowly; we don't have a lot of time.

What can architects do?

We can be activists and we can be more provocative within our practices. We can challenge clients: for instance, if a client wants to knock a building down, we can certainly say, 'Why not reuse it?' But we can't operate independently; we reflect the values of society. It's easier when mayors say we don't want to knock down old buildings. Architects will benefit if society shifts its values. We can leverage that shift.

davidchipperfield.com



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INNOVATION IN PRINT AWARD

Kohkoku
Magazine
Japan

There are no rules for magazine binding, so independent Japanese title *Kohkoku* sought to maximise its impact. In place of the typical spine-binding, it developed a system whereby the delivery box itself becomes the publication after the recipient peels open perforations on the side.

With 250 different custom covers that list distributors, shipping companies and bookshops, the format is an unconventional way to raise its readers' awareness of publishing's distribution chain. — ASG
kohkoku.jp

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Rodrigo Cardoso, Benjamin McMahon. STILL LIFE: Jonas Marguet

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BEST COLLABORATION

LaFuma
× Bleu de
Chauffe
France

Good collaboration needs both parties to play to their strengths, which is why we were particularly excited when French brand LaFuma, known for its 1950s camping chairs, began to work with legendary leather bags brand Bleu de Chauffe. Together, they've produced a smart folding chair with a tubular steel frame and butter-soft leather seat. Two brands are indeed better than one. — LIF
lafuma-mobilier.fr;
bleu-de-chauffe.com



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BEST VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Studio Astolfi
Portugal

Visual merchandising remains a bedrock of selling and when done right, the practice is a joy to behold. For one of the world's finest examples, we're celebrating the work of Portugal's Studio Astolfi, which has carved out an attractive niche with window displays for brands including Hermès. Founded by Joana Astolfi, a trained architect with a love of art, the studio's work for the famed luxury goods purveyor has wowed passersby of its shops in Portugal, Spain and France. Her imaginative commissions can take upwards of two months to realise and feature both static and moving parts.

She relies on a small staff and an external team of woodcarvers, welders and glass-makers to bring her sketches to life. From handmade model aeroplanes to beautiful spinning tops made from cherry and walnut, Hermès is able to elegantly showcase its handbags and scarves each season within Astolfi's fanciful miniature worlds.

"Window displays are a sort of open-air gallery," says Astolfi of the *wunderkammer*-like scenes her studio creates, including a mountain railway and underwater world complete with a giant squid. "Online shopping is flat; this is the opposite. It's scenographic and it lifts people's moods." — IC
studioastolfi.pt



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BEST SOCIAL ARCHITECT

Fernanda Canales Mexico

Fernanda Canales does not build enormous residential towers, flashy offices or headline-grabbing memorials; she builds communities. MONOCLE is giving this Mexican talent the Design Award for best social architect because of her deep commitment to architecture as a force for good. “Architecture defines the interaction between people,” says Canales. “It builds frustration or openness.” Her projects strive for the latter. In several of Mexico’s most troubled border cities she has created multipurpose public spaces – a park, a reading room, a health centre and an auditorium – where residents have the rare chance to “feel safe and at home” and interact with neighbours. In Mexico City, her sensitive approach has led to housing that helps inhabitants embrace their surroundings. Canales sees architecture as “our window to the world”; she likes to keep that window open. — HAN

What does architecture mean to you?

It’s our primary element of protection and also our primary element of interaction. It defines our sense of self and our relationship with other people, with the world, with rain – whatever you decide to leave outside. It’s the physical element that allows you to shut something out or open up to it.

You seem very interested in how architecture affects people’s lives...

We can’t speak about isolated buildings. I’ve always thought of the impact of architecture rather than the building or interior space itself. My whole career has been spent trying to understand the relationship between a bed, a sidewalk and a city; the effect of a carpet or rooftop that, in a way, defines society and culture, and their relationship with resources. As architects, we build society and a way of understanding the place where you live.

How important is a site-specific approach?

The processes we usually follow in architectural offices are mistaken because we’re dividing what happens on the site from what happens on a desk or a laptop. We’re making decisions very far away from where things are happening, from the sun, noises or topography. It’s not possible to understand all of those things from just a couple of visits. My generation has tried to learn how to do a project without visiting the site, just by having aerial photos and doing international competitions and global architecture. I try to spend as much time as possible at the site. I don’t have a team with an established office. I work with a very local understanding of who’s going to build a project and what’s going to happen when it’s built. When you translate a drawing to a topography, many things are happening that no computer or video call can help with. So for me, it’s more about walking – doing architecture with your feet.

fernandacanales.com



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MOST ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

LED Wall Lamp Sweden

Good design doesn’t have to break the bank, and Dutch-Kiwi designer Sabine Marcelis proves that with her LED Wall Lamp, produced for this year’s Ikea Art Event. In the vein of the great mid-century

designers like Charles and Ray Eames, who used mass-production to bring fine furniture to the wider world, Marcelis has tapped into the potential of Ikea’s supply chain to ensure that anyone and everyone can enjoy her lamp. The subtle statement piece can be lit in a selection of five different colours, making it perfect for any space and any time of day. That’s why it’s in our awards lineup – and the homes of MONOCLE staffers too. — NM ikea.com



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BEST ACCESSORY

Hyper Clarity binoculars Japan

MONOCLE loves these Fujifilm binoculars for the satisfying solidity of the materials: a robust but light magnesium-alloy body and lenses that offer startlingly bright, pin-sharp vision. “We were striving for perfection,” says designer Shohei Narasaki. “Not only in appearance but also in feel, texture and operability.” — FW fujifilm.com



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COSIEST APARTMENT

Cassandra Bradfield Denmark

Swedish-American designer Cassandra Bradfield’s skills in combining materials, colour and design to create this inviting home helped her to win this award. She recently added the finishing touches to her 90 sq m apartment on the ground floor of a 19th-century Copenhagen building, brushing the walls in varying tones of custom whites. “I’m very

specific about colour,” she says. “Bright white can be too reflective.” Bradfield, head designer at design firm Frama, took the space in 2019, previously fitted with a mezzanine, accessible via a staircase that doubles as a kitchen cabinet. “In a small apartment, it’s all about optimising space,” she says. A neutral palette and warming tones add a sense of calm. And for the long Danish winters? Lamps wrapped in rice paper shades. — GDE



PHOTOGRAPHERS: Kohji Take, Jan Sandergaard, Erik Von Frankenberg. STILL LIFE: Jonas Margriet

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BEST IN CRAFT

The town of Kasama Japan

Even in a country packed with peerless craftsmanship, our best in craft winner is a relative unknown. The rural Japanese town of Kasama is in a quiet corner of Ibaraki, about 100km from the bright lights of Tokyo. And despite low name recognition, it has been producing pottery for generations and in the past 50 years has become a magnet for free-spirited potters who prefer not to stick to the rules.

While most Japanese ceramic styles are shaped by carefully guarded traditions, Kasama has no single style. The 200-plus potters working here are an eclectic bunch, happily experimenting and producing exhilaratingly different pieces. There’s Aya Kondo, a former schoolteacher from Akita, who found her calling 25 years ago and is now known for her decorative *ichin* style. Or Akio Nukaga, the star of the Kasama scene, who creates simple vessels and plates carved with vertical lines. He originally trained in textile design and worked as a carpenter before putting down roots in Kasama. When artist Takashi Murakami started collecting his work, global success followed.

One of the most respected is 73-year-old Osamu Tsutsui, who moved to Kasama 45 years ago and works from an idyllic garden studio next to his A-frame house. Tsutsui’s work is in London’s V&A museum but his core output is dark angular tableware with a metallic sheen beloved of *washoku* chefs. The town has a string of galleries, a ceramics



college (with more applicants than places) and a lively ceramics festival every spring.

Crafts curator Ryoko Mutasono, based in London, has been working hard to raise the international profile of this unusual town through pottery exchanges and exhibitions in the UK. Last year her Kasama Potters project won backing from Japan’s trade ministry. “No one quite knows how to define Kasama-ware, which is part of its strength,” she says. “New ideas and ceramicists have always flowed in and out, and an international dimension is a logical extension of that.” She says that presenting pottery overseas has allowed the potters to look at their work and their community in a new way. “I hope that they can attain a new lease of life for the future.” — FW kasamapotters.com



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BEST DESIGN CONCEPT
Casa Mutina
Italy

A showroom is a fairly self-explanatory concept: a space where a brand makes its case to the public by putting its products in the best light. For interior design brands, this should be a no-brainer but too often the best-laid plans fall short of expectations. We therefore tip our hat to Italy's Mutina for going the extra mile with its Casa Mutina guesthouse project.

Rather than make a standoffish exhibit, the ceramic specialist has created four inviting suites to drive home the richness and tactility of its porcelain stoneware and ancillary range of *boiserie*, mirrors and related accessories. Forget the much-abused word "experience" and imagine simply the chance to wake up in a lovely flat – in this case one in the historic centre of Modena – where it's easy to admire the materials first-hand instead of via flat digital renderings or ugly sample boxes. Developed in conjunction with the Copenhagen-based OEO Studio, it rises above the crowded competition. — IC mutina.it



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MOST ENDURING DESIGN
Braun T2
Germany

Design at its best should be built to last and show an enduring understanding of both human needs and materials. Braun's T2 table lighter satisfies all of these criteria and more. It's MONOCLE's choice for the best collectable and it's a product that deserves to be back in production. The simplicity of its form is matched by the

clarity of its function. The lozenge-shaped button is designed for a thumb – the button dictates how to hold the lighter and puts it in a position that's perfect for lighting a cigarette. Endorsing the qualities of a cigarette lighter might seem anachronistic in a society that vapes but product forms are designed to be enjoyed by both hand and eye. Today, when all of our clicks and switches are noiseless taps on touchscreens, a big button set into polished steel is a far preferable experience. Smoking is bad for you; good design isn't. — RSP braun.com



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BEST FOOD PACKAGING
Limón
Norway



The colourful packaging of Norwegian food chain Limón might be easy on the eye but that's not the only reason we're fans. As consumers become more conscious of the fate of our waste, designers need to be clever when it comes to lessening the environmental impact of wrappers and bottles that are tossed away as quickly as they arrive. Oslo-based studio Goods put this at the centre of its concept when it was enlisted by the chain to create its packaging; poké dishes are served in sugarcane-pulp bowls, which are then sealed with lids made from recycled bottles and consumed using wooden cutlery. — HU goods.no



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BEST DESIGN OUTPOST
Cigale & Fourmi
Finland

"The environment is so beautiful in Hanko that it was natural for me to open the shop here," says Anna Fromond, co-founder of Cigale & Fourmi and the mind behind the finest design destination of 2021. Housed in a 19th-century wooden pavilion and curated with an inimitable Nordic sensibility, it puts this idyllic Finnish resort town on the itinerary of any design devotee.

Cigale & Fourmi specialises in pottery and has an expert selection of homewares, from chic Danish sun chairs to hardy Fiskars garden tools. Its ethos lies in the name, drawn from a French fable about an ant and a grasshopper. "We have the two sides in all of us: the hard worker and the idler," says Fromond. "You can only find balance by making room for both."

The shop has a broader scope than selling good design wares, however. "People can stop for a coffee after a stroll on the beach or lounge in the hammocks," says Fromond. "I imagine this as a living room for the community." — SRO cigalefourmi.com

PHOTOGRAPHER: Juhho Kivva. STILL LIFE: Jonas Marguet



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BEST NEW BIKE
Hermès Ash Wood Bike
France

This compact bicycle is a tour de force of design skill from a brand long bound to craft. It's a beauty, highlighting how sometimes it

takes a name from outside of an established industry to shake things up. Inspired by small Japanese city bikes, the French fashion house's handsomely carved, timber-framed cycle is not only novel but also lightweight and practical. It can be fitted with front and back baskets for a weekend trip to the market, while wide tyres and built-in lights ensure comfort and safety. To top it off, the luxury brand's equestrian origins and skills as a master saddler mean that the seat is as comfortable as they get. — JWE hermes.com



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TOP PROPERTY DEVELOPER
Milieu Property
Australia

While most developed cities are filled with profit-focused developers that typically cut corners when it comes to providing good architecture, in Melbourne buildings need to prioritise purpose. With this in mind, we want to recognise the work of Milieu Property, a leading residential developer that plays a responsible role in the city.

Its latest success story is Breese Street, a new apartment block that it commissioned DKO and Breathe Architecture to design. It's a breezy building in the suburb of Brunswick that has been strategically designed to aid cross-ventilation. Through quality glazing and tree planting, the architects have made this building thermally efficient, cutting the



costs and pollution associated with air-conditioning. The vernacular of these post-industrial streets is referenced in the factory-style sawtooth roofing and characterful brickwork façades. — NSG milieuproperty.com.au

BEST COVER DESIGN
SZ-Magazin
Germany

SZ-Magazin, the weekly supplement of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, is famed for both great journalism and collectable covers. For a recent travel issue, art director Thomas Kartsolis and designer David Henne enlisted Iranian visual artist Golsa Golchini to transport readers far away from the housebound reality of the past year. Mixing painting and digital techniques, the resulting cover cheerfully celebrated travel and offered a visual escape in uncertain times. — FS sueddeutsche.de

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BEST GARDENING SHOP
Kinetic Farm
Indonesia

Most urban dwellers know the longing for more nature in their lives and an increasing



number of shops cater to those looking to add green to their homes. Kinetic Farm has gone above and beyond to distinguish itself in a crowded market. From specialist soils to bonsai trees, this is the one-stop destination for those looking to develop their green fingers and improve wellbeing within the home. The range of offerings is clear in the 150 types of edible plant sat within the outside display area alone. However, the sheer diversity of its products certainly doesn't limit the shop to hardcore specialists. An in-house botanist is ready to advise on issues from the perfect pot for the office all the way up to starting a full-blown urban farm. — PSP

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BEST DESIGN FOR CHILDREN
'World Travel with Moka'
South Korea



World Travel with Moka is a "playbook" by South Korean studio Practice that's educational and aesthetically pleasing. Created for the Hyundai Museum

of Kids' Books and Art, each volume explores a different country through activities. "Children don't need the world oversimplified for them," says Practice's Yoo Yoon Seok. "This is a meaningful way to engage audiences of all ages." You might even keep it after your kids have grown up. — HY we-practice.com

PHOTOGRAPHER: Martin Weslake. STILL LIFE: Jonas Marguet. IMAGES: Tom Ross

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BEST EDUCATION BUILDING
Melopee school
Belgium

Melopee is a *brede* school, a Dutch term for educational buildings that also offer public space to the neighbourhood for gatherings and recreation. As with many institutional projects, the brief was concerned with providing multiple uses but, in this case, the school also had to make the most of its beautiful surroundings, facing the water in an old dockyard in Ghent. The recently opened result is a minimalist building with a metal

skeleton-like structure that both provides shelter for the facilities and makes the most of the views of its surrounding landscape, acting as a piece of urban stitching within a beautifully transparent steel grid. “We live in a society where playgrounds are private and separated from public life,” says Xaveer de Geyter, founder of xdga, the Belgian architecture studio behind the building. “On the contrary, the intention for this building is to serve as a public passage.” Those shooting hoops on its sky-high basketball courts, or enjoying a play-park dramatically set in the upper echelons, are firmly in agreement with us when we say that this a school building that teaches everyone a lot about how to enjoy public space. — LIF xdga.be



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SMARTEST HOME SOLUTION
Gira switches
Germany

Great design should make the complex simple. That’s what German brand Gira has done with its switches and outlets, which can control everything from light and temperature to sound, access and security in your home. Gira’s products are intuitive to use, push our buttons in all the right ways and are worth celebrating. — FS gira.com



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MOST CREATIVE AGENCY
Studio Blanco
Italy

The aspiration to always add value to its print, fashion and digital projects

sets Studio Blanco apart. Its low-impact website for design firm Formafantasma received global acclaim for spotlighting the damage that websites can do. “The idea is always to develop a language with a client,” says co-founder Valerio Tamagnini (pictured, with co-founder Sara Tamagnini). — NSG studioblanco.it



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BEST OFFICE DESIGN
The Bureau
France

With the world of work changing rapidly, those tasked with creating the offices of the future face a huge challenge. But in Paris, Franklin Azzi Architecture has created an impressive proposition for co-working company The Bureau.

Two 19th-century Haussmann buildings offer communal and private working areas and cosy lounges as well as a proper in-house restaurant headed by a chef. “We wanted to make sure that our response was long-term, keeping in mind that these spaces need to be flexible,” says Franklin Azzi. The interior is furnished with vintage pieces by French decorator The Socialite Family, inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. Wood plays a leading role on the ground floor, where an open-plan layout is interrupted only by an impressive oak-lined partition with in-built booths and bookshelves. “Instead of filling offices with as many people as possible,” says Azzi. “The Bureau is offering a different kind of workplace.” — JWE franklinazzi.fr

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Luigi Fiano, Juhio Kava. STILL LIFE: Jonas Marguet. IMAGES: Valerio Geraci

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DESIGNER OF THE YEAR
Jenni Roininen
Finland

The best designers are those who wear many hats, from sketchpad to final product. This is why we’ve honoured Jenni Roininen, creative director of Finnish furniture brand Nikari, as MONOCLE’s designer of the year. Working alongside a team of cabinet-makers in the village of Fiskars, she oversees an ever-growing catalogue of world-class wooden designs. — NSG



How do you keep Nikari’s brand identity so strong?

We use our skills to guide the look of the products: the pieces can vary in form but when they are crafted the same way they evoke the same feeling. So in terms of a Nikari identity, these pieces tend to work together even if they’re not from the same designer or family.

How do you use design to improve the environments we live in and work in?

I work closely with designers and architects. Say a client wants to make holes in one of our tables for some microphones. In this case, I would tell the client: “The way this table will be used will change long before the table needs to change.” We treat our furniture like buildings — it needs to have the flexibility to be used in different ways as the times change. nikari.fi

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BEST FOR THE BAR
Tank Stool
Germany

The next appointment in our selection of the world’s best design is a knees-up at the bar, thanks to this innovative stool designed by David Thulstrup. Crafted by German furniture brand E15 from

various options of sturdy hardwood, its defining feature is the smartly integrated metal-lined footrest, which eliminates the need for annoying rails lining the bottom of bars. Easy to pick up and move around — and resting just as fittingly in a speakeasy as it would by a homely kitchen counter — it’s the perfect design to get the party started with this spring. — NSG e15.com



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MOST SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Tip Ton RE Switzerland

Vitra's Tip Ton RE chair is a superlative example of the circular economy in action. Designed for Vitra by Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby in 2011, it has just been reissued made from recycled plastic derived from waste, retaining its natural grey colour. "The variation in recycled material adds depth and gives it a story," says Vitra's chief design officer Christian Grosen Rasmussen. — *sz vitra.com*



PHOTOGRAPHER: Julie Mayfeng STILLLIFE: Jonas Marguet IMAGE: Robert Rieger

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RETAIL DESIGN OF THE YEAR

The Hyundai Seoul South Korea

Completed in February and now welcoming wowed

shoppers, the new Hyundai Seoul has used great design to meet a lofty ambition: to be the world's best shopping centre. This mammoth effort from architect Richard Meier, Hyundai Seoul's internal design team and multiple collaborators provides acres of public space, including a sprawling rooftop

"sound forest", where music plays softly through an area of towering trees and waterfalls. While clever engineering makes for easy navigation, the grandest architectural gesture has been raising the top level to allow for sprawling windows, bathing the entire complex in natural light. — *NSG thehyundaiseoul.com*



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BEST FOR VINTAGE
Coroto Berlin
Germany

Sourcing vintage furniture is something many prefer to leave to the experts. Thankfully, Berliners can call on the personalised expertise of Coroto founders Jan Deubel and David D'Aubeterre. They not only show an eclectic selection of pieces but also offer exemplary empathetic service.

The showroom was refreshed in 2021, so now is the perfect moment to recognise their efforts. Visitors to Coroto pass through various curated zones, incorporating



everything from Scandinavian mid-century modern to vintage Italian. Your home will be better for visiting. — *NSG coroto.de*



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BEST MONOGRAPH
Ando's Hands
1976–2020
Japan

The story of Japanese master of concrete architecture Tadao Ando is a rags-to-riches tale. From a poor family, he grew up to become a boxer before teaching himself architecture. This story is captured in

Ando's Hands: Tadao Ando Works 1976-2020, a new monograph published by CCC Art Lab, which showcases 38 projects from the past 44 years through images and sketches. There are only 300 copies available and added prestige comes from the inclusion of hand drawings by Ando on *washi* paper. We can't all get a copy but it's a timely reminder that the best design embodies the highest of aspirations. — *ASG ccc-artlab.jp*

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BEST BRAND ACTIVATION

Truffer showroom and office
Switzerland

The term “brand activation” might evoke thoughts of uninspiring marketing campaigns but Truffer, the family business behind the famous Vals Stone, is setting a superior



example. Doubling down on its physical presence in the Swiss mountain village of Vals, the company gave international architecture firm Kengo Kuma & Associates (KKA) free rein to design its new headquarters.

The striking building, which also houses a showroom and exhibition space,

welcomes prospective clients as well as curious passersby. The aim was to tell the story of the village through the material export the company focuses on. “Instead of a standard commercial space, the building itself showcases all the different applications of the Vals Stone”, says KKA partner Yuki Ikeguchi, who led the project.

The material is applied throughout the interiors and façade, with large slabs seeming to levitate. The overall effect is a quite literal grounding of the brand through the material that’s at its centre. And the temple-like form is finished with the elegant architectural polish for which KKA is known. — SRO truffer.ch



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BEST RETAIL CONCEPT

Powwowwow Community Mall
Thailand

A favourite recent example of shops bringing a neighbourhood together is Bangkok’s Powwowwow Community Mall. Nestled amid a jumble of high-rises in central Bangkok, this humble two-storey complex links shops, salons and restaurants with a series of walkways, lined with potted trees.

It’s an inviting spot, designed by Thai firm Allzone, with sustainability at its core. Combating the city’s reliance on air conditioning, thick concrete walls help retail plots stay cool and the metal-sheet roof enables air-flow and provides vital shade to seating areas. — PSP allzonedesignall.com



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BEST RESTAURANT DESIGN

Masu
Vietnam

Architect Keiji Ashizawa is a master of minimalism. We’ve long admired his work in his native Japan but it’s his latest project, Masu in Hanoi, that is this award’s worthy recipient.

The Japanese restaurant takes inspiration from traditional Vietnamese townhouses and *machiya* (historic wooden homes that originated in Kyoto) to create a tranquil oasis in the centre of the bustling capital.

The calming feeling comes down to a focus on simple shapes: Isamu Noguchi’s orb-like pendant lamps hang lazily over tables and the restaurant exterior is patterned with geometric wooden frames. Ashizawa also matches Masu’s commitment to serving a sustainable menu with wooden chairs that are made in the region, to the designer’s specifications. — PSP keijidesign.com



PHOTOGRAPHERS: Benya Hegenbarth, Luca Mengeshei, Marvin Zilm



THE AWARD
Trophy cabinet
Global

For an award that needed to represent a particularly MONOCLE flavour of design, we called upon collaborator – and friend – Harry Thaler of South Tyrol to create the concept. Thaler is a specialist in working with the beautiful timbers of this Italian Alpine region and for this project the designer chose to combine oak from the area, with brass to form this understated trophy that doubles up as a paperweight. Every winner of a Monocle Design Award will receive one of a limited number of these timber and brass pieces, as well as a certificate of recognition.

“The fact that the award has two purposes [as ornament and paperweight] corresponds with my principles of sustainability and functionality in design,” says Thaler, whose international work across industrial design and architecture tends to blend traditional craftsmanship with novel shapes and interesting, tactile materials. “The winners will receive an award that does not just gather dust on the shelves but can be used daily.” — NSG

