

Delightful designs

Winners at the Singapore Institute of Architects Architectural Design Awards include a resort and onsen spa, hotel, an underpass and a light installation



Bryna Singh

Amanemu is a luxury resort and onsen spa while Oasia Hotel Downtown is a mixed-use development comprising a hotel and office spaces.

The former is conceived as a contemplative retreat nestled on an island in Japan, while the latter is located right in the heart of Singapore's Central Business District.

Both projects were different in nature and scale, but they brought along with them so much delight and high standards of design.



MR ASHVINKUMAR KANTILAL, who was part of the jury that awarded Building Of The Year prizes to Amanemu resort and onsen spa and Oasia Hotel Downtown

These two diverse works of architecture now hold the same accolade: Both have been awarded Building Of The Year – the top prize from the architecture fraternity here – at this year's annual Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) Architectural Design Awards.

The double win is an uncommon occurrence in the history of the awards, which is into its 17th edition. Usually, there is just one recipient for this top accolade.

The two winning projects were picked by a five-member jury that included Mr Ashvinkumar Kantilal, past president of SIA; and Professor Ho Puay Peng, head of the architecture department at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Ashvinkumar says the two entries were “exceptional” and that the judges “unanimously” felt they were both deserving of an award each.

“Both projects were different in nature and scale, but they brought along with them so much delight and high standards of design,” he says.

According to the jury's citation for Amanemu, which was helmed by Kerry Hill Architects, judges were impressed by the architects' skilful use of light, lines and colours, all of which contributed to the work's “impressive aesthetic purity and ability to capture the spirit of the place”.

Architecture firm Woha, which spearheaded the design of the Oasia Hotel Downtown project, was lauded by the judges for its architects' ability to craft intimate public spaces within the 27-storey high-rise building and for successfully implementing the idea of tropical integration in modern cities with its lush green facade.

Both these developments first bagged a design award in the Commercial Projects category before being considered for the top prize.

Two projects also clinched awards in the Special Categories category: light installation Rhizome House by DP Architects and Bayshore Park Underpass by GreenhillLi.

In total, 11 awards were given out at the ceremony on Thursday night – two for Building Of The Year, four design awards and five honourable mentions.

These design awards are the profession's highest recognition of works that showcase excellence in architectural design.

It drew 105 entries this year, up from last year's 91.

But while there were 13 design awards and 14 honourable mentions last year, this year's number of award winners is significantly smaller.

When asked about the lean crop, Mr Ashvinkumar says: “There is no restriction in the judging process, in terms of having to give an award in every category or having to meet a certain number of awards.”

The judging criteria, according to SIA, include how original and innovative the designs are, their sustainability and how well they respond to users' needs and the climate.

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Underpass gets a lively update

Design Award winner for Special Categories: Bayshore Park Underpass by GreenhillLi

The Bayshore Park Underpass is described in the jury citation as an architectural work that is fun, joyful and rhythmic. It connects residential developments on the north side of the East Coast Parkway expressway to East Coast Park and the beach on the other side.

Designed by architecture firm GreenhillLi, this work won a design award for Special Categories.

The underpass was opened to the public in late 2015.

Ms Li Sau Kei and Mr Nigel Greenhill, who led their team of architects for this project, say it was “very gratifying” to have won an award “for a small project such as this”.

“In our practice, we place great importance on design quality, regardless of the building size.”

The judges applauded the architects' ability to transform a utilitarian underpass, which used to consist only of stair access and a dark tunnel, into architecture of significance.

The underpass now features the use of bright colours and dynamic forms, which create a sense of movement through space.

The chrome yellow roof that



The chrome yellow roof (top) is visually stunning and houses a path lined with walls in a ‘bar-code’ pattern (above). PHOTOS: GREENHILLI

encloses the underpass is visually stunning. Rotating square frames which resolve into triangular planes twist along and above, like a giant origami snake.

Below ground, the walls of the underpass are finished in durable black and white tiles arranged in a bold vertical “bar-code” pattern, which creates a sense of movement as pedestrians walk through it.

When they emerge on the other side, all ready for play and recreation, the natural light and lush surrounds of the East Coast Park are revealed.

The transition is complete – one has left the city and entered the world of sand, sea and sky.