

Wooden light design earns a trip to Sweden

The prototype luminaire design of third-year BSc (Interior Architecture) student Mandi Botha was not just the overall winner of the national Haute Lumière Award for 2012, but also earned her a five-day trip to Alingsås, Sweden, to attend the Professional Lighting Designers Association Workshop, which is led by leading European lighting designers. The final prototype, entitled *Joint Exposure*, was also showcased at the South African Fashion Week in Johannesburg and the European Light and Design Centre in Cape Town.

The Haute Lumière Award is presented in association with *VISI* magazine, and reflects the need to explore and stimulate debate on light as a design medium. According to the organisers, fashioned and designed environments require imaginative light solutions, which convey meaning, mood, atmosphere and visual appeal.

The purpose of the award is to rethink the application of artificial light as a crucial, primary aspect of design and as an inventive medium that extends beyond the functional requirements of illumination. A different theme or subject is explored each year, and for the 2012 competition, entrants were invited to enter designs for wooden lights.

Entrants had to use only timber to create a self-supporting light fitting of any description. They had to manipulate light using any source and colour, and in designing the object, they were advised to think primarily of how light interacts with the light fitting and also with its surroundings. The adjudicating panel was looking for a design that was highly innovative, imaginative and original.

The competition was open to both student and professional designers and architects. The only requirement was that the designs should be original and created specifically for this competition.

Entries were evaluated on the basis of the exploration of light as a medium, not the refinement of a complete design. In stage one, five designs were taken forward and constructed as prototypes, and a winner was selected in stage two.

The adjudication panel was a veritable 'who's who' in the design world, and comprised Annemarie Meintjies (*VISI* magazine),

Lucilla Booyzen (South African Fashion Week), Marc Machtelinckx (European Light and Design Centre), Atsushi Hirata (DSGN Interior Design), Paul Pamboukian (Pamboukian Associates), Randal Wahl (Regent Lighting), Robert Alexander (Regent Designs) and Silvio Rech (Silvio Rech Lesley Carstens Architects).

In evaluating Botha's design, the judges found that it met their criteria by going beyond the mere fact that light exists. She experimented with the unknown, pushed the edge and sought essence, worked with perception and deception, showed an understanding of light as a medium and how light occupies space, and celebrated and promoted excellence in the understanding and application of artificial light. Her design was not about a light fitting alone, but about light as a medium.

As winner, Botha had the opportunity to attend the Professional Lighting Designers Association Workshop in Alingsås, Sweden, in September 2012. The workshop was educational and she had the opportunity to work with the qualities of light and to realise an urban lighting project with state-of-the-art equipment. The workshop was led by leading European lighting designers.

In addition to delivering the winner of this competition, the University of Pretoria can also boast that four of the other six finalists in the competition were also graduates of the Department of Interior Architecture at UP. These are Esther Krugell, Sureen Gouws, Thomas Gouws and Tienie van Rooyen. ➔

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