

Marabastad bath house proposal wins prestigious international prize

Tuks Architecture graduate Ruann van der Westhuizen was ranked among the world's eight best graduates in architecture, urban design and landscape architecture at the prestigious Hunter Douglas Awards, proving once again that graduates from the University of Pretoria's Department of Architecture are among the best in the world.

The Hunter Douglas Awards is a competition organised by the Archiprix Foundation – a network of young, prominent architects. The foundation biannually invites 1 400 universities worldwide to submit their best graduation projects. A jury studies the entries and nominates 24 projects for the awards, from which eight winners are selected.

Ruann's project was one of more than 300 entries from approximately 70 countries. It was also nominated as one of the participants' favourites. The proposal formed part of Ruann's master's dissertation, which he completed in 2009. With the concept of a public bath house in Marabastad, Pretoria, he investigated the ritual of cleansing in an urban environment.

According to Ruann, the project was essentially an experiment to investigate the potential of introducing basic (ablution) services in an area where the density of people in need of such services would easily justify the infrastructure investment. Marabastad is such a place, as it is a large public transport interchange and is a prominent point of entry to the Pretoria CBD. "The strength of the project lies in the fact that it addresses a simple activity through a sensitive architectural intervention. It is based on the needs of users and presents opportunities through the reinterpretation of the loaded term "bath house" in a South

African urban context," says Ruann, who now works at DVDWA Architects in Pretoria.

As one of the 24 finalists, Ruann participated in workshops and an exhibition hosted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the build-up to the awards ceremony, which took place at the Guggenheim Museum in New York on 9 June 2011.

Ruann's dissertation, completed under study leader Jacques Laubscher and mentor Marianne de Klerk, achieved top honours in the department in 2009.

This is the fourth major accolade awarded to students or graduates of the Department of Architecture in the last 12 months. A year ago, Jacques Orton's electronic dissertation received an international award from the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. In September 2010, Carla Taljaard, Stephen Steyn and Warwick Manley won the national Murray & Roberts Des Baker Competition.

The most recent award was that received by Jankel Nieuwoudt, who won the DesignHub Respond-Renew-Revitalise Competition in February 2011, sponsored by Saint Gobain. The University's Department of Architecture was also named best university participant. ➔

➔ *The act of layering permeable concrete skins establishes a hierarchy of privacy. Movement through the structure aims to manifest this layered concept seamlessly, resulting in deep edges.*

