



DUTCH JURY REPORT

A dazzling outcome!

The jury for the Dutch participants of the 6th international Concrete Design Competition, Elegance: exploring intelligent solutions, was challenged by a dazzling amount of entries: 208 (364 A1-panels)! A great success for the role of a design approach based on material research and exploration in higher education. Also the 2013-2014 cycle gave - with distance - an all-time record of entries, with participating students from Eindhoven University of Technology, Delft University of Technology, the Academy of Architecture Amsterdam, Academy of Architecture Tilburg and ArtEZ Institute of the Arts Zwolle. The jury is impressed by this outcome, but also thinks it is rather logical that students should experience this material based, hands-on design approach during their study.

What is Elegance?

The subtitle of the theme of the 2013-2014 cycle (exploring intelligent solutions) might have been even more a criterion for the jury than the actual title (Elegance). Students are not expected to know everything, but should have shown that they learned something from this competition. First of all, concrete should be logical in the design. In other words: concrete should have a certain necessity or purpose. Or: what kind of intelligence or quality has been added to the concrete? And secondly, the exploration of the material has to be visible in the presentation, whether it is on the scale of elements, architecture, building techniques or technology. The jury questioned the perception of reality and tectonic sense of some of the ideas. A beautiful atmospheric background or (sometimes splendidly done) computer rendering of a design very often just miss crucial concrete characteristics (weight, tactility, aging process), but also its own typical way to build with concrete (hardening process, moulds, scale, structural principles). Which steps have been made by the student to truly explore the material, and is it presented convincingly?

'Elegance' is already the 6th edition of the Concrete Design Competition. The jury therefore asked itself the question: what to do when you see an idea that you have seen before? It is impossible to trace back if a student was inspired by existing ideas, even 'borrowed' some ideas, or perhaps didn't even know about the entire existence at all. An additional important criterion for the jury therefore was: the idea should have an original, genuine factor. This could be a total new concept, but also an idea that inspires because of its potential, or a further development of an existing idea. With the selected prizewinners the jury hopes to have shown the enormous variety of elegance.

Challenge

With a record of 208 entries, the jury felt a little uncomfortable to make a first selection. For practical reasons it was just impossible to give every panel the time and discussion that it deserves. The jury members decided to prepare individually before the selection procedure. But on the day of the selection, an entry had to convince at least one jury member in just 10 seconds to survive the first round... Remarkably, exactly one hour later round 1 resulted in 104 survivors: exactly half!



The next rounds in the selection procedure can be summarized by the phrase 'convince me'. Finally there was space for discussion. With great enthusiasm the various designs were analyzed from different angles: does this design convince me? But also the jury members tried to convince each other. Emotion and taste were almost never the expressed reasons to plead for a personal favorite. In this round many original entries didn't survive. Unique ideas, sometimes poetic, sometimes hi-tech, that impress on first sight now didn't exceed the level of inspiring idea anymore. Still, also these entries make the Concrete Design Competition valuable and great fun to witness. The jury thinks it was a real pleasure and privilege to have had a rather intimate insight in the minds of all the students, even though it was sometimes way to short.

Some impressions and discussion

Koen van Hoof, Midas van Boekel, Academy of Architecture Amsterdam (MK111)

'The New Facade' shows 'soft' elements that you immediately would like to touch. It quickly received nicknames from the jury: belly-button wall, Quentin Tarantino-wall. It is surprising that one simple triangular element can make such a variety in spatial quality. The element needs further study on the endings. What happens at the corner of the facade? Or does it remain only a screen that plays with open/light and closed?

Jasper Vrugte, Bowen Zhu, Delft University of Technology (JB116)

Tiwanee van der Horst, Carlijn Kingma, Delft University of Technology (KH027)

JB116 is a poetic exploration of the facade that studies the elegance of nature. Where the rays of light are not a unique idea (also other entries discovered playing with light and contrast, through openings in concrete, for example entry KH027), the sensational play of rain gently dropping over the window is highly atmospheric and introduces the element of time (it reminds of an hourglass). The presentation of the integrated experiences of these natural forces convinced the jury. It certainly shows the potential of concrete. Nevertheless, the idea stays with quite an ordinary wall that doesn't show enough architectural, spatial design. In that perspective the jury felt more architectural expression in KH027, with a pure concept of one fully closed wall and one with perforations. Critical note on KH027: the projection of the volume on the underlying field could be more realistic. Both entries have potential, but need further study.

Daan Hens, Eindhoven University of Technology (DH887)

The jury admires the structural concept and the usage of local soil for the 'Afghan War Memorial'. Whether the building volume underground can justify being a war memorial is questioned. Mostly a memorial emphasizes the place around it, not the building. The one vertical elegant shape without the circular volumes around it would have been simpler, stronger; with only one view from underground to the sky. Perhaps there is a little too much elegance on different levels: the structural concept, the shape, the symbolism?



Martin Beumer, Delft University of Technology (MB531)

The jury was happy to see entries with a technological focus. 'Sound Curve' shows academic exploration, with innovative results. It also shows great potential for concrete. Architecturally the sound barrier could be a bit more challenging. The presentation was excellent in terms of explaining the design, but lacks seduction in terms of elegance.

Laurent Khuat Duy, Eindhoven University of Technology (LK111)

Not the elegant arcs of 'The Lost Sanctuary' but its innovative moulding technique deserves credit from the jury. The under water method is surprising and has enormous potential. The explanation on the panel is done convincingly. The location of the sanctuary is highly questionable. Who would dare to put any kind of architectural design in such a beautiful hidden lagoon in a cave? With less distraction from the moulding technique, this entry would have ended high in the ranking.

Winners and honorable mentions

The jury could spend in total € 3.000. Maximum three winners could be selected, with or without ranking. Additionally honorable mentions could be given. A hard task with 208 entries! The jury selected four honorable mentions. They are not at all a consolation prize!

Honorable mentions

Roel van Nieuwenhuizen, Academy of Architecture Tilburg (RN040)

'Eat your house out' was maybe the best example of an entry that easily survived the first few selection rounds due to its originality. But when it came to selecting the winner, the well-presented idea of a highly intelligent and poetic moulding technique remained too much in the conceptual phase. The thought of reducing waste of mould material (rather give it a spatial function) shows great potential. While the shape of the standard bird house itself was not unanimously convincing, the jury would like to encourage to further explore this innovative moulding technique.

Sebastiaan van de Koppel, Jan Top, Lennert van der Linden, Delft University of Technology (UT126)

The 'Urban Tree' perfectly explores which elegant concrete shapes can be derived from a technical approach. The jury compliments the students on the structural design. The location of the urban tree, in the middle of the well-known square in Rotterdam, devaluates the design, though. It can be questioned if this square can handle another object. The jury would have preferred to see the design without a location, or asking aloud on which place it would fit. Perhaps, instead, there could be a bit more focus on the aging process of the concrete in relation to the water screen, or showing the detail of the rim with tie ring.

Kyong-Ho Choi, Eindhoven University of Technology (KH014)

The elements of 'Stepping Concretes' might look a little flat and standard, but it introduces a new type of bridge system that is surely elegant. The jury absolutely believes this system works in terms



of architecture and spatial usage, both in the open and closed situation. Also concrete is logical in the design. If the opening and closing would work practically, is doubted. There are still issues left to solve: it's likely that the Amsterdam canals are not without trash that can block the bridge system entirely, which would result in complete loss of elegant functionality of the Stepping Concretes.

Bram van Kaathoven, Eindhoven University of Technology (CD991)

The study to upgrade ruins and play with old and new with simple concrete volumes deserves an honorable mention. Concrete is with little doubt the only material that can finish the original volume of old, partly destroyed church towers, and at the same time keep their mass and weight. Concrete also has enough textural strength (or: imperfection), and at the same time lack of structural detail to form a natural integration with the ruin, without stealing its attention. Technically concrete is also the only material that can 'stitch' the new structure to the existing one. The design of the concrete addition itself didn't convince the jury enough. The window that frames the next tower, as seen from inside, is not visible on the outside. Perhaps this is done because it would have harmed the simplicity and modesty of the concrete volume anyway?

Winners

The jury finally selected three winners. For sure there was the need for one first place. After all, it is a competition. But to categorize the three winners in a different amount of prize money was impossible. Besides, the winner that would win more money would have to buy more rounds of Guinness in Dublin anyway, since all three winners receive a 7-day Masterclass in Dublin from 17-23 August, on top of the prize money! So: 'yes' to a ranking, and € 1.000 for all three winners.

3rd prize

Merle Rosalie van Marissing, Sebastiaan Benjamin Buitenhuis, Delft University of Technology (MB177)

Perhaps 'Rainsaver' has some difficulty to express its elegance at first sight. Also it can be questioned if the umbrella-shapes have been studied enough (how do you make it, how does the foundation work). Nonetheless, it is most likely one of the strongest entries with a message that is attached directly to present day situations and problems. Where other designs could have been made also 10, 20 or even more years ago, Rainsaver discusses topics of today: sustainability and the social context. It offers an elegant solution, in elegant shapes. The material concrete is logical, although the jury would like to give an additional note: the production of concrete, and thus cement, in sub-Saharan Africa is rapidly growing (although some countries don't produce cement, as far as the jury knows). Still, the need for concrete is higher. A sustainable message that should be incorporated in Rainsaver is the prescription of local materials.



2nd prize

Reinier Simons, Eindhoven University of Technology (RS123)

These melodramatic columns of light integrate architecture, structure and material elegantly. With relatively simple means, a new kind of column is created that is so much more elegant than the usual massive column. The additions of light, tactility, scale and drama transform the column from a functional necessity into architecture in itself. This innovative side of the design unquestionable deserves a prize. The study to different building systems is a bit questionable. Perhaps here the idea could be elaborated further, for example with physical concrete models. In a monumental setting the effect is convincing. The somewhat depressing atmosphere of the presentation seems to justify the idea, with some mixed feelings of the jury members though.

1st prize

Tim Jongerius, Delft University of Technology (CC005)

After careful discussion the Dutch winner of the 6th Concrete Design Competition is Tim Jongerius with his design 'Concrete Cones'. A good design in which there has been rightfully studied on concrete characteristics, architectural endings and connections of the cones, but also on realization. The presentation is very realistic: you could imagine even the sound it would give when you knock on the concrete. The presentation shows a nice mix in an elegant design, possible application (intelligent solution) and tests with physical concrete models (exploration). Of course further study can be done, for example on how to create facades with physically closed openings (with glass?), or how to improve structural connections. The jury realizes this questions only raise because of the specific crucial designer steps that have been made in this design: more elaboration brings better imagination and more specific questions. The jury wants to express its appreciation for the steps that are made that have resulted in a great elegant concrete design: this is the true winner of the Concrete Design Competition!

The jury is thrilled with the success of the Concrete Design Competition. Judging all those designs, with great variety and smartness, was a true pleasure. An inspiring experience and adventure!

Jury

Rein Jansma, chairman - Zwarts & Jansma Architects

Barbara Kuit - Information Based Architecture

Erick de Lyon - Atelier de Lyon

Lotte Mattelaer - Office9

Diederik Veenendaal - ETH Zurich / Witteveen + Bos

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