



exploring the hybrid condition

Irish Jury Report

Introduction

22 anonymous submissions were considered by the assessment jury on 27th May 2008; the jury was pleased to be informed subsequent to the assessment that the entries were received from three schools of architecture in Ireland.

The assessment jury considered the general quality of the entries to be of a high standard with around half of the entries making it through the first phase of the assessment.

Brief

The assessment jury considered the brief to have been well judged and the assignment presented to students allowed for wide range of intellectual responses and investigations while also encouraging and demanding a technical examination of the boundaries of the material. In this regard the jury was of the opinion that while the brief was clear in directing that the proposals should be design-led, the most successful submissions were those which supported the proposed designs with practical and/or technical investigations which demonstrated a more considered understanding of the material and the merit of the proposed application.

We noted in particular the following elements of the brief which we considered to be of particular import in our debate and assessment of the entries :

The competition seeks to investigate through research and design any notion of Implicit Performance.

...applications where concrete forms the basis but is not necessarily the only element at play.

We look for concrete surpassing its 'original' performance to the point of becoming a new material

The Jury considered these extracts from the brief as clear a call for an exploration for imaginative design solutions in the use of concrete with other materials and resources in order to present some new ideas or directions in the use and application of the material.

Assessment

Of the 22 entries approximately half of the submissions remained in contention at the end of the first assessment round and the jury noted a number of issues and themes which emerged consistently across the entries.

- the structural boundaries of the material
- the development of hybrid solutions of concrete and other organic and solid materials
- the exploration of potential energy and other energy led ideas for concrete use
- the design of concrete and glass elements
- the design of low tech / sustainable designs for repetitive and or prefabricated shelters

While the jury was impressed with many of the individual attempts at investigation and design of proposals in each of the above categories, we considered a small number of entries to have achieved results beyond their initial subject by developing and expanding their design ideas on the material in a manner that reached to the core of 'implicit performance'.

- RA 493 Wearable Concrete

Wearable Concrete is a proposal for concrete shoes which is developed through the use of concrete and soft 'aero beads' to develop a lightweight material that is capable of being moulded and shaped to suit any shape and function such as an handcrafted shoe for an individual foot. A mould is developed to suit the particular foot and the product is then further developed through the integration of wax elements into the mould for the shoe which is then melted to allow for the later fixing of a simple leather shoe strap. The proposal is developed practically and photographs of the modelled shoe as worn are included which demonstrate the aesthetic qualities of the design proposal and its practical application. It was noted that the proposal was well presented and demonstrated a refinement of the original idea together with practical research application of additional lighter materials to achieve a lightweight solution. The Jury noted that the process of solving the many practical problems of associated with the development of a concrete shoe demonstrated the potential of the idea in providing solutions for new uses and performance of concrete.

- LR 311 Mosscrete

Mosscrete is an investigation into the live aspects of concrete and in particular the possibility of exploiting its constituent elements such as lime in forming a living organic material that develops and grows over time. The entry is conceptually very strong and applies first stage of research and analysis on how the organic material could be developed in concrete. The entry also investigates the use of acidic substances such as yoghurts in concrete mixes which would assist in the the cultivation of moss. The Jury was also mindful of the possibility of the use of coarse aggregate porous concrete which could assist the in the retention and development of moss on a concrete surface in an external environment. Moss as a material thrives in damp low light conditions and while in western cultures is regarded as a weed it is highly regarded in other cultures such as in Japanese gardens as bringing a calm or stillness to a scene. While this aspect of the material was not noted in the submission the Jury was impressed with the possibilities of developing a new concrete aesthetic through such a living material and the research that demonstrated this potential permeated through the minds of the Jury and led to much discussion throughout the assessment. It was felt that while the potential of the idea was not fully developed in the entry submission the original research and concept was deserving of high merit.

- FI 802 Inflatable Concrete

Inflatable Concrete was one of many entries to research the application of a reusable formwork to achieve a high level concept of multiple practical building forms or shelters through a low technical solution. The design proposals was the development of a 'flatpack' type formwork which would form a basic human shelter and thereby had the capacity for multiple applications as a low energy building form possibly for developing regions.

The Jury considered the entry represented the best design solution of all proposals which fell into this category and that the application was supported by some small scale technical research through models which demonstrated an understanding of the potential of the material.

The design proposal did not push the boundary of the performance of the material in a manner that surpassed its original performance; nevertheless, through application, construction and delivery the proposal was highly regarded by the Jury.

Results

The three Irish projects selected by the jury to go forward to the International Final of 'Implicit Performance' : Third International Concrete Design Competition for Students, were:

- RA 493 Wearable Concrete
- LR311 Mosscrete
- FI802 Inflatable Concrete

The Jury also selected entry no. GC 013 as the reserve finalist, should a reserve be required.

The Jury was most impressed with entry no. RA 493: 'Wearable Concrete' as the entry which exploited the potential of the brief in a real and imaginative manner and presented a technically developed proposal with an aesthetic quality that was most impressive. The jury decided to award this entry the top prize of 1,750.00. We were also very impressed with the thinking and concept behind entry no. LR311: 'Mosscrete' and we considered that the submission demonstrated a potential that was unique amongst the entrants and we awarded a second prize of 1,500.00 to this entry. We also awarded a third prize of 750.00 to FI 802: 'Inflatable Concrete', being the best application of a concept for high level production of a simple concrete formwork.

General Comments

There were a number of general comments which would like to note at the conclusion of the assessment:

We feel the competition brief was very well considered and offered great possibilities for students of architecture in proposing design led solutions through research and examination for new ideas in the application of concrete. We considered that the language of the brief was engaging and supported different design possibilities design ideas that could be submitted within the framework of 'implicit performance'. We welcomed the inclusion of a research element to the competition brief and we were impressed with the level of response to the call for research within the timeframe of what is generally allowed in any competition. We considered this aspect of the brief could be retained and developed further in future competitions.

We were a little disappointed with the number of entries and would ask the competition organisers to seek a wider number of entries for next year perhaps by approaching all schools and/or opening the competition to all students rather than students of any particular year.

Joan McCoy
Sean Moylan
David Smith
Sean Mahon, Chairman

May 2008