



Design
Awards
2026



The Monocle Design Awards

2026

Edited by
*Nic Monisse &
Grace Charlton*

Still life
Michael Bodiam



From sleek Italian furniture and Danish trade schools to Thai pocket parks and Namibian bikes, the following 25 people, products and places have made it onto the podium for Monocle's annual Design Awards. This year's edition is a celebration of craft, beauty and life-enhancing work.

The award by Harry Thaler

The trophy for the Monocle Design Awards has been created by Harry Thaler since the first prizes were given out in 2021. To mark the evolution of the awards this year, which have a more focused selection of 25 prize winners, the Lana-based Italian designer has refreshed the trophy-cum-paperweight with a completely new material: cork. Produced in partnership with Portuguese manufacturer 3DCork, it embodies several key qualities of design that we value: it's beautiful, natural and durable.



2

Best landscape and construction | Australia

Robert Plumb Collective with Dangar Barin Smith

01

Landscape design is only as good as its delivery. By keeping the process in-house, this collective has been creating some of Australia's best residential and commercial spaces.

"Dangar Barin Smith started as a lawnmowing business in the 1990s and evolved into a creative practice," says Will Dangar. "Then Robert Plumb was just sort of tacked on." Dangar is explaining the evolution of landscape and contracting group Robert Plumb Collective, which he established and co-owns

with Bill Clifton. "I was making furniture and doing some installing for Will," adds the latter. "We had the same accountant, who said that it would be a good idea to team up."

In the decades since, the creative practice – now a landscape-architecture studio run with Naomi Barin and Tom Smith – became the headline act, delivering some of Australia's best residential and commercial spaces, prioritising horticulture as much as physical construction. Thanks to the family of businesses formed with Clifton, however, construction remains of the highest standard. Robert Plumb Build is an evolution



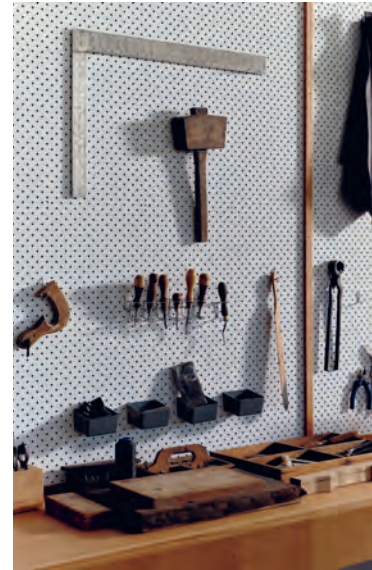
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Material matters

Evolution is essential in the landscape and construction industry, which is why the addition of Second Edition, a pioneering research-based materials company, is a boon for the collective.



PHOTOGRAPHER: Nick Bannehr



7

of Clifton's original residential building practice, with joinery studio Cranbrook Workshop creating custom furniture and Robert Plumb Fix, Landscape and Management supporting delivery and more. The collective recently added Second Edition, a research practice that minimises construction waste through material reuse. Across the group, there are carpenters, draughtspeople, horticulturalists and wood machinists too.

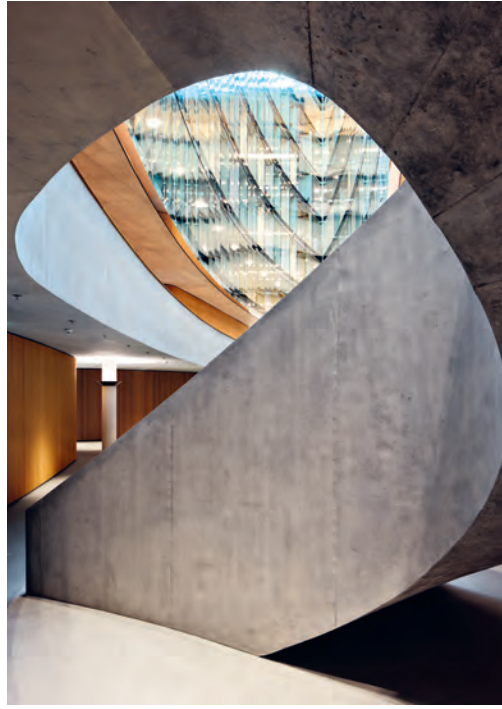
"We can control much of the process in-house, eliminating risk," says Clifton, pointing to projects such as Love Shack, a small dwelling that was built in a private garden, featuring

materials developed by Second Edition. Bismarck House is another standout. Here, Robert Plumb Collective built a landscape defined by a Bismarck palm that provides instant visual impact – an apt metaphor for a company shaking up how our homes and landscapes are delivered. — NM robertplumbcollective.com.au; dangarbarinsmith.com.au

1. In the shade at Bismarck House
2. Naomi Barin, Will Dangar and Tom Smith
3. Laneway landscape
4. A hot tub at the Love Shack
5. Tools of the trade
6. In Cranbrook Workshop
7. Blending indoors and out



Monocle Top 25



Best headquarters | *Switzerland*

Lombard Odier

02

This Swiss bank's striking new digs prove that, at its best, corporate architecture can reflect the values of a brand, while enhancing the quality of life of its employees and clients.

An outstanding headquarters should make a statement – which is exactly what Lombard Odier's new outpost on the shores of Lake Geneva does. "Is this what you think of when you picture a Swiss bank?" asks Hubert Keller. The senior managing partner poses the question while showing Monocle around his firm's new digs. The arrival experience, for both staff and clients, feels more like pulling into the porte-cochere of a luxury hotel than entering the offices of one of Switzerland's leading wealth- and asset-management firms. "It's more than a building," adds Keller. "It represents who we are today."

The company's ambitions were reflected in its decision to consolidate the firm's presence, uniting its more than 2,000-strong staff, who were previously scattered across six sites in Geneva. An international competition was launched and Pritzker prize-winning firm Herzog & de Meuron won the commission. "It understood the DNA of the company," says

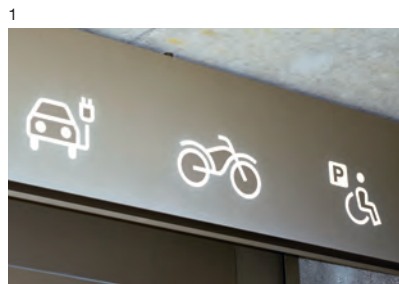


1. Sweeping forms in the Lombard Odier HQ
2. Pillars frame views to the mountains and lake

2

Fabio Mancone, partner and chief branding officer at Lombard Odier responsible for brand and business development. “We stand for integrity, openness and sustainability. We needed a building that embodied that.”

The HQ’s façade is defined by thin, curved slabs and columns, making the most of the views. “It’s all about light and transparency,” says Herzog & de Meuron’s Louise Lemoine. Inside, Paris-based Rodolphe Parente has created client spaces with a palette of timber and natural stone. Client areas feature private dining and meeting rooms and terraces with striking landscape outlooks. Staff areas include double-height meeting and working spaces with terraces overlooking the lake and mountains, plus restaurants, a gym and a coffee shop. Equal priority has been given to both client and employee needs. “It has changed the way that I work,” says Keller. “And our teams too.” — NM lombardodier.com; herzogdemeuron.com; rodolpheparente.com



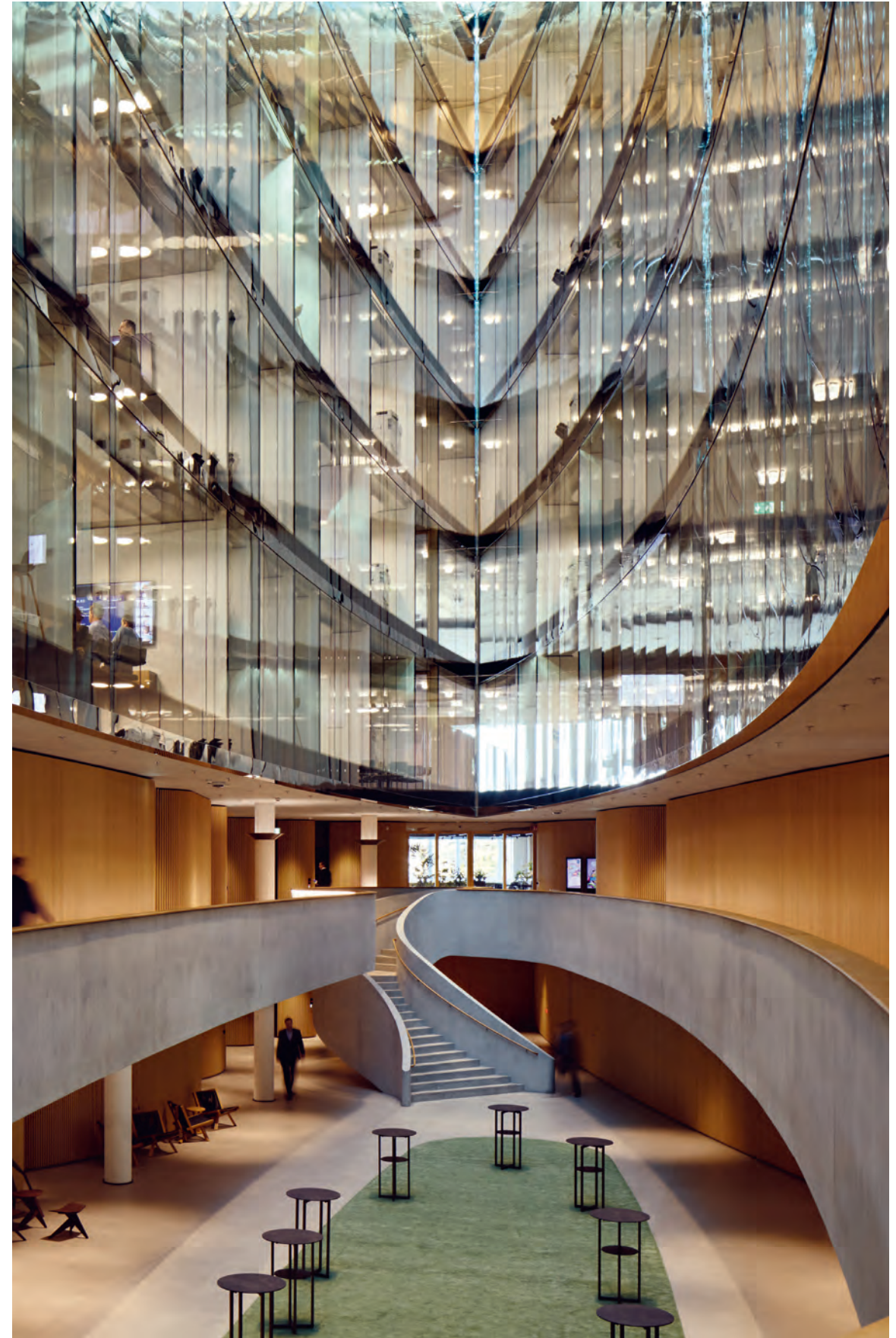
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1. Natural light floods the building’s interior
2. Playful wayfinding
3. Rich materiality meets gently curving walls
4. Grand auditorium
5. Sweeping staircase

Best headquarters



PHOTOGRAPHER: Hannes Heizer

5

Monocle Top 25



Best in audio | France

Turntable PP-1
by Waiting for Ideas

03

This sleek aluminium turntable combines analogue ritual with digital convenience to deliver the best of both worlds.

Paris-based studio Waiting for Ideas created the PP-1 record player to eliminate fiddly settings and the conventional version's cumbersome tonearm. Its two discreet dials – one to set the RPM speed and another to pause, play, skip and adjust the volume – strip the listening experience back to its essence.

“PP stands for ‘Plug and Play,’” says Jean-Baptiste Anotin, the founder of Waiting for Ideas. “The goal was to create a product as seamless and intuitive as a music app while preserving the quality and ritual of vinyl.” The manufacturer’s considered approach to design sets it apart, with its made-to-order items functioning as pieces of art in their own right. “I engage with music daily,” adds Anotin. “Designing for it feels like an extension of that art. By facilitating the listening experience, I feel as though I’m part of a wider creative process.” — GCH waiting-for-ideas.com

Leading creative director



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Leading creative director | France

Pierre-Alexis Guinet

04

Good creative directors can deliver snappy new logos but great ones – like Guinet – can help brands both tell and understand their own story.

After initial meetings, clients of Paris-based studio Pierre-Alexis Guinet – which works on projects ranging from visual identities to refreshed packaging – are handed a magazine-style book. The bespoke publication is filled with visual references from snippets of historical archives and auction catalogues to travel snaps and screenshots from the internet. “It’s our bible,” Guinet tells Monocle from his studio in Île Saint-Louis. “It outlines the story that we aim to tell.”

It’s an approach that makes Guinet and his team stand out. In an industry dominated by endless scrolling, the book is a welcome antidote. He encourages clients and colleagues to scribble on, earmark or even tear out pages of their copy, allowing it to evolve as a project’s direction takes shape.

In the seven years since founding his namesake studio, Guinet has worked with hospitality, fashion and lifestyle companies based in France and abroad. Key clients include luxury houses Balenciaga and Hermès (he conceived the modular, block-colour packaging for the brand’s *haute-joaillerie* division), rugmaker Les Editions de Tapis and jewellers Pascale Monvoisin and Marie Lichtenberg, as well as hoteliers and restaurateurs in Saint-Tropez, Miami and beyond. The studio’s services range from art directing a campaign to designing a monogram or staff uniforms that hit the mark.

While Guinet trained in graphic design, he says that his work is about more than just building an eye-catching visual identity. Instead, he seeks to create entire worlds, replete with “props” that range from brand books to bathrobes, coffee cups, keyrings and even scents. “That’s how to create heritage,” he says. All of it, though, starts with a book – which is appropriate, given that even in a digital age, it remains one of the most effective storytelling mediums. — AW pierrealexisguinet.com



1. Packaging for the likes of the Cap d’Antibes Beach Hotel and Hermès
2. A brand book – or ‘bible’
3. Pierre-Alexis Guinet
4. Packaging for Marie Lichtenberg

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PHOTOGRAPHER: Diane Bettis. IMAGE: Felix Del Maillot

Best trade school | *Denmark*

Håndværksskollegiet Herning

05

A hall of residence built to inspire trainee tradespeople is working to plug Denmark's skills gap by encouraging an exchange of ideas and expertise.

Like many nations, Denmark is in desperate need of tradespeople: plumbers, builders, roofers, carpenters, electricians and skilled manual workers, known in the Nordic country as *håndværker*. This dearth makes the recent opening of Håndværksskollegiet, a hall of residence for trainees in such fields, particularly welcome.

"Part of the purpose of this building is to persuade young people to pursue a skilled-worker education," its principal, Flemming Moestrup, tells Monocle from the new campus in the small town of Herning on the Jutland peninsula. The halls include accommodation with shared kitchens and living space, featuring double-height workshops for wood, metal and bricklaying, with state-of-the-art tools and machinery.

"The idea that the building celebrates craftspeople was very inspiring for us," says Copenhagen-based architect Dorte Mandrup, whose studio designed Håndværksskollegiet. "We wanted to create communal spaces but, when we designed these small dwellings, it was also about making them dignified."

Around the building, exposed junctions, electricity systems and raw brick hint at the



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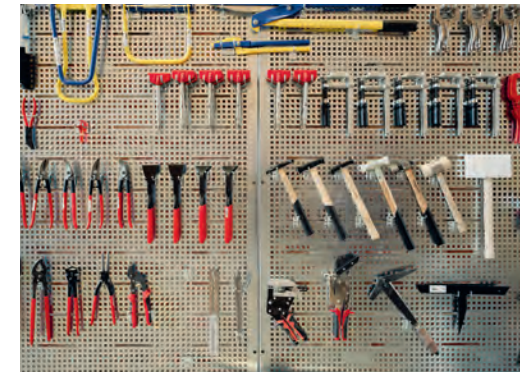
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Students at work

"It's really inspiring to live here. You want to work better when you see all of the skill that has been put into this building."

Emilie Mølgaard

Age: 20
Machine carpenter,
apprenticed to TCM Operations

"The building is so nice and there are opportunities for training my skills in my spare time. It is nice that you get experience in other fields too."

Andreas Møller Simonsen

Age: 20
Cabinet maker,
apprenticed to Multiform

"The workshops are so well equipped and there's a great feeling of community here. They put a lot of emphasis on that. I work with furniture but I have been fascinated by the metalwork. I have learnt a lot about other disciplines."

Laura Dahl

Age: 18
Machine carpenter,
apprenticed at HTM

1. From left, teacher Jesper Skovgaard Jespersen with Kjartan Korsgaard and Andreas Møller Simonsen
2. Nicolai Nielsen at work
3. Håndværksskollegiet's exterior
4. Laura Dahl
5. Andreas Møller Simonsen
6. A tool for every job

construction process. The structural frame of the building is made from pine; the doors and floors are oak. Meanwhile, the interior panelling is spruce.

The construction of the building and the lion's share of its running costs is funded by charitable foundation BRF Fonden. In Herning, many residents are apprentices at local firms and attend courses at the nearby technical college. They can choose from workshops and lectures that are open to all trainees in the evenings and at weekends: a carpenter can learn about the work of an electrician; a bricklayer can get a feel for 3D printing. "That crossover is one of our biggest draws," says Moestrup.

As we leave, he points to an incongruous brick fireplace in the large assembly hall. "Just before Christmas, a couple of the students said that we needed a fireplace to hang stockings on so a group of them built this," he says. There are plans to turn the fireplace into a party loudspeaker. For once, getting hold of an electrician shouldn't be a problem. — MB
haandvaerkskollegiet-herning.dk;
dortemandrup.dk



2



Chimney lamp
An art deco-inspired lamp with a hand-finished aluminium body and shade, combining classic elegance with modern simplicity.

Arc light
A sculptural stainless-steel table light formed from three balanced curves.

Gazing Ball
A steel disc and half-silvered bulb celebrating sculptural curiosity and raw materials.

Best in lighting | *The Netherlands*

Bothi **06**

Bothi's lighting strikes a delicate balance between physical form and intangible illumination.

Founded in 2025 by Ollee Means, Amsterdam-based design brand Bothi is fast emerging as a name to know, thanks to its confident approach to simple, enduring design. Lights in its collection are designed to emit a soft glow and quietly hold their presence in a room. "Creating a lamp is creating atmosphere, which I find intriguing," says Means. "Light is quiet but decisive." — EGO
bothi.design

Monocle Top 25

Best design imprint | *Portugal*

Monade **07**

This publishing house produces architecture books that are accessible without shying away from deep academic enquiry – giving the discipline the respect it deserves.

João Carmo Simões and Daniela Sá launched Lisbon-based publishing house Monade in 2016. Over the past 10 years, they have edited books that are neither didactic nor merely decorative, showing the breadth and depth of architecture. "We don't want our books to be siloed because architecture itself isn't that way," says Sá.

With 12 titles to date, Monade offers an insightful window into the discipline. One of its books might delve into the creative mind of a celebrated designer through sketches and journal entries or turn the lens on a single building through layered photography. — GSL
monadebooks.com



'Imagining the Evident'
A tribute to Álvaro Siza, featuring an extensive set of his drawings.

'Civitas: São Paulo'
A richly illustrated monograph exploring the city-building aspirations of Brazil's modernists.

'Porosis'
A visual exploration of the architecture of Nuno Brandão Costa from the Porto School of Architecture.

'The Order of Landscape'
A celebration of the work of leading contemporary landscape architect João Gomes da Silva.



Legacy architect | Switzerland

Tilla Theus

08

For architecture that stands the test of time, imbue it with character by celebrating context and culture.

Swiss architect Tilla Theus has spent more than 50 years proving that architecture can be warm and inviting. She graduated from ETH Zürich in 1969 and immediately opened her own practice, developing a distinctive approach involving the introduction of a sense of atmospheric warmth to historic buildings and new-builds alike. To discuss her continually evolving practice, Monocle meets her at Widder Hotel, a grouping of medieval townhouses dating from the 11th to 15th centuries that she turned into a cosy hospitality outpost. — LBA

You often work with heritage buildings. Tell us about your process.

Widder Hotel was a complex project that encompassed everything that defines my passion for this work: it was about understanding the substance of eight medieval townhouses and transforming them into a five-star hotel without imitating the luxury language of the time, with its arches, balustrades and brocade.



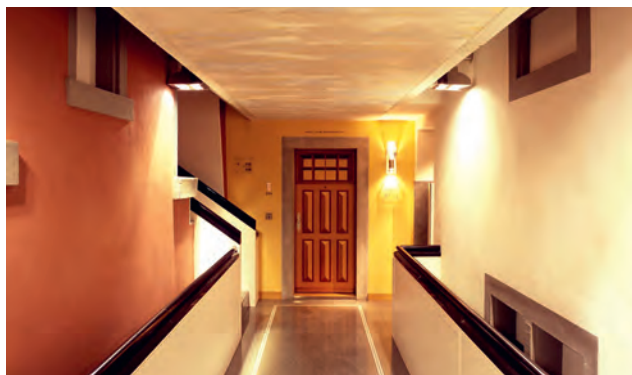
How does this work express your broader architectural ethos?

A building has a soul. The task is to understand it and to make it visible through precise and sustained engagement. Old buildings, in particular, have souls. They must be understood and translated into the present.

What do you think should be the architecture industry's priorities?

The task today is to create buildings that not only meet current needs but can also accommodate future uses. A modern hospital must be modular so that it can adapt to new processes and technologies. The same applies to offices, industrial buildings, hospitality and housing.

tillatheus.ch



3

Designer-maker



Designer-maker | UK

Andu Masebo

09

Some of the best contemporary designers, such as Andu Masebo, know how to get their hands dirty, balancing bespoke and industrial production to deliver playful, expertly made works.

In his London workshop, Andu Masebo takes a hands-on approach to design. With a background in carpentry, metalwork and ceramics, Masebo creates furniture and homeware with unexpected details for users to enjoy. Take, for example, his On the Round shelving system. The freestanding unit is made from soft douglas fir and features rotating dividers that can be tilted at will. Metal designs for the tabletop include a bent piece of tubular steel repurposed as a candleholder or an incense holder that can rock back and forth for better smoke diffusion. Masebo's applied approach to design creates a conversation between the workshop and the final destination of a piece. — GCH

How would you describe your design style?

I see design as an excuse to insert myself into the world. I am interested in the places and the conversations that it can bring about. The interactions that I would have within the parameters that I set for a project lead to the choice of materials or a form.

How do you approach a new project?

You have to establish a set of brackets, the parameters of what a project is about. A precondition could be finding out what the local shopkeepers think of how an area is changing. I've done projects where I've followed a bus route or started off by disassembling a car. You set yourself a task or a process of investigation. From there, the output is filtered through interactions, observations, people you've met, places you've gone.

How important is it for you to have a hands-on approach and be a maker, as well as a designer?

There is meditation to be found in the act of doing. For me, it's not so much about the ritualistic elements of making. It's more that, when I design something, I want it to be considered from top to bottom – the intention for the overall object but also the way that the bolts connect to the feet that interface with the floor. I want that to be part of the object and not an afterthought. It requires going through the motions of making to really understand the process of how it comes together.

andumasebo.com



1. The Widder Hotel
2. Tilla Theus
3. Hallway at The Widder
4. Sculptural seat
5. Andu Masebo
6. Objet d'art

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Yves Bachmann, Dan Wilson



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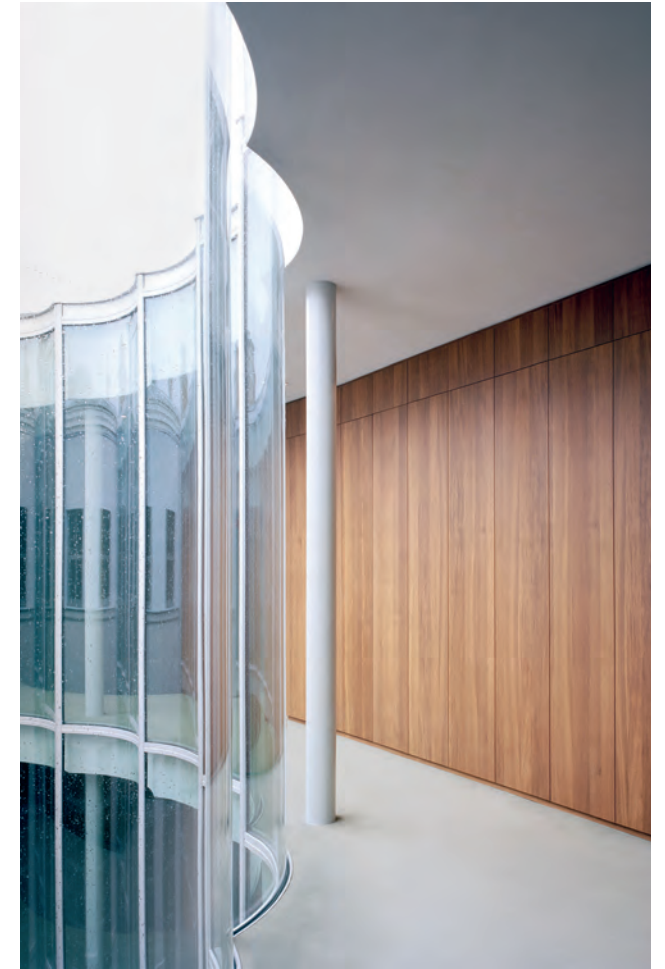
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Best government building | France

Chamber of Notaries

10

The renovation of a Haussmannian administrative building in Paris has quietly helped to reshape the public's perception of the professionals who occupy it.

The French Chamber of Notaries in Paris's Place du Châtelet is an architectural marvel hiding in plain sight. "Most Parisians don't know about this building," says David Dottelonde of Atelier Senzu. "It's one of the oldest Haussmannian buildings in the city, dating back to 1855." The notary profession's ties to this location even date back to the medieval period, when royal scribes formalised legal acts under the authority of the crown.

When Dottelonde and co-founder Wandrille Marchais took on the restoration of the building, they were tasked with bringing it up to date but also with helping to modernise the image of the people working there. "The profession isn't well known by the public, even though it's central to major moments in people's lives," says Marchais. "The brief was to reconnect the building with the clients and with the public space," says Dottelonde.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Rory Gardiner

Part of the façade was replaced with glass windows. The stone removed to achieve this was then repurposed for slabs used in the entrance-hall floor. The stucco columns and woodwork inside were restored, while moveable aluminium partitions were added to allow for a more flexible use of the space. Since this renovation project was commissioned in 2019, the number of French notaries has increased. In 2016 a law reformed the profession, making it more accessible but, as a result, more competitive. At the same time, the field is adapting to digitisation and cybersecurity challenges, while trying to preserve the security and trust that it has cultivated for centuries. Notaries' home in Paris, however, is now better-equipped to lead them into this new era, thanks to the forward-thinking work of Atelier Senzu. — NM lateliersenzu.com

1. Heritage interiors renewed for modern meetings
2. Refreshed, double-height spaces at street level
3. Details date to 1855
4. Place du Châtelet
5. Renovations introduced natural lighting



Printer of choice | *Switzerland*

Zürich Print Institute

11

This institution dedicated to printmaking is keeping traditional methods alive and working to broaden the craft's reach.

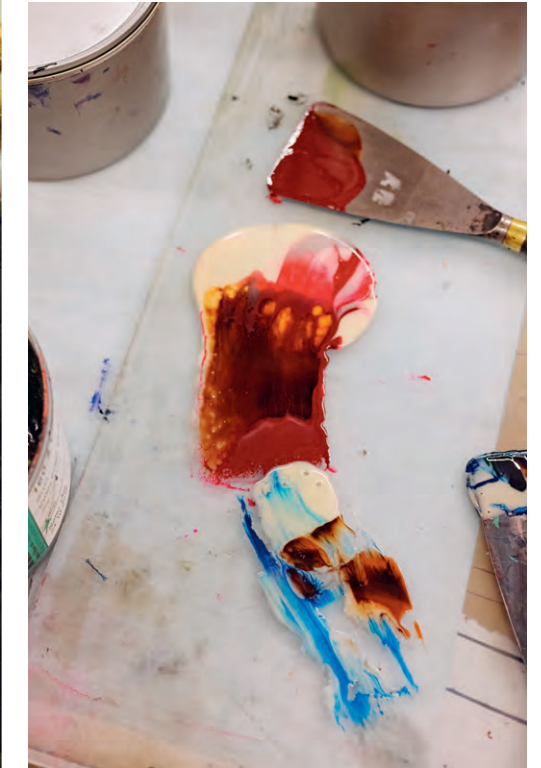
The Zürich Print Institute has a mission: to promote printmaking by bringing ever more people into the fold. Established in 2023 by gallerist David Khalat and master printer Thomi Wolfensberger, it offers high-end production facilities for world-class artists to practice all four processes of traditional printmaking: relief, intaglio, lithography and screen printing. "On the one hand, we're trying to keep the tradition of printmaking alive," says Khalat. "But we're also pushing the boundaries with format. The work often starts as a print, then becomes an art object."

The institute also wants to engage with people beyond the artistic community, offering consultancy on everything from classical techniques to digital and 3D methods. It brings in the public through exhibitions and cultural programming at its location in central Zürich too. "It's a programme that interests both the artists and the audience," says Khalat. — JJE zurichprintinstitute.com



Keepers of the flame
The survival of traditional production methods such as printmaking is essential if we want to preserve cultural identities, maintain irreplaceable human skills and support local economies.

1. Print in process
2. Producing a print by Iranian photographer Shirana Shahbazi
3. Tools of the trade
4. Manual processing





Eye on the prize
The auto-focus lens is equipped with 10 modes that can be adjusted to produce a variety of atmospheric effects.

Past, present and future
There's cross-generational appeal to the camera, according to Fujifilm's Ryuichiro Takai. "Younger users say that it has the vibe of an old camera, while older generations feel a sense of nostalgia," he says.

Best camera | *Japan*

Fujifilm instax mini Evo Cinema **12**

This satisfyingly tactile new camera is a hybrid that brings digital convenience to analogue rituals.

Fujifilm is making a strong case for using a real camera instead of your smartphone with its instax mini Evo Cinema, an all-in-one instant camera, smartphone photo printer and video camera. The look and vertical shooting style of this fun-packed device was inspired by the company's Fujica Single-8 film camera, which was released in 1965.

The result is a gadget that's easy to use (just click in a film cartridge) and offers visually compelling prints and endless options for tinkering with stills and footage. "We found that users feel the actions involved in photography – looking through a finder, deciding on composition and pressing the shutter – make each photo and the memories captured in it feel more special," says Ryuichiro Takai, the general manager of Fujifilm's Consumer Imaging Group. This camera, he says, is about recording the emotion of a moment. — FW global.fujifilm.com

Best chair



Best dining chair | *Denmark*

After by Fritz Hansen **13**

This chair draws on the core principles of Danish design – but also updates them for the present.

It takes skill and chutzpah to reinvent Denmark's considerable design heritage, particularly as a non-native. But that's what Cyprus-born, London-based designer Michael Anastassiades achieved when he unveiled his After series for Danish

manufacturer Fritz Hansen. The collection comprises a dining table and this generously proportioned chair, which comes in ash or deep burgundy, with the option to include a seat cushion.

While the classic, clean curves of the After chair's silhouette evoke mid-century masters Kaare Klint and Poul Kjaerholm, the quiet confidence of its execution is distinctively Anastassiades's own. The outcome is a continuation of a design dialogue rooted in honouring the work of past luminaries by gently nudging the conversation forward. — EGO fritzhenzen.com



Designers of the year | Italy

Formafantasma

14

Drawing from manufacturing, technology and material research, this Milan-based studio has made a strength out of connecting disciplines and cultures.

“Our name includes ‘fantasma’, which means ghost,” says Simone Farresin. “Someone once said that’s because our work is always haunted by other things. It’s a good point.” The Milanese designer is one half of Formafantasma, the studio that he established with Andrea Trimarchi in 2009. The practice is renowned for drawing on influences ranging from film and art to technology, manufacturing and material research. “We don’t think about our work in isolation,” says Trimarchi. Recent portfolio highlights include set design for Marni, exhibition design for Fondation Cartier, staging for Cassina, repairable lighting for Flos and symposiums for Prada.

“Design sits in between economy, ecology, the life of people and visual culture,” says Farresin. “So why is it so strange that in our work we implement all those things?” We’re certainly not arguing. — NM formafantasma.com



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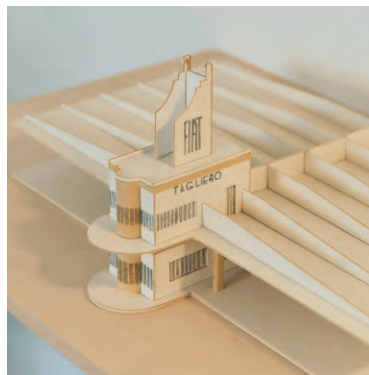
1. Simone Farresin and Andrea Trimarchi
2. Architectural model
3. Furniture for Friedman Benda
4. Marni set at Milan Fashion Week
5. Superwire lamp for Flos
6. Backyard Community Club
7. Triangular cut-outs in the rammed-earth wall

Research in action

Formafantasma’s work for lighting brand Flos drew inspiration from their research project into repairable technology. The resulting Superwire light features readily replaceable LED lights.



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PHOTOGRAPHER: Andrea Pagnano. IMAGES: Julien Lanoie



6

Finest for fitness | Ghana

Backyard Community Club

15

This tennis facility rooted in West African traditions has set its sights on changing the country’s sporting culture.

In Accra’s Osu neighbourhood, the Backyard Community Club’s clay court has become an incubator for a group of promising young tennis players. Built to the design of Glenn DeRoche, the founder of architecture studio DeRoche Projects, it uses local materials to enclose the court. Precast rammed-earth panels, produced and assembled in the city, help to reduce the project’s carbon footprint. “The material gives the court a distinct identity,” says DeRoche. “It feels grounded and really rooted in West Africa.”

From the outside, the compound is striking. Its walls feature triangular cut-outs that allow light to dance across the surface. Another notable feature is the 230 sq m garden that is adjacent to the court, where plants and fruits are grown to provide nutrition to the players. Post-match, they are welcome to pick mint growing on the site.

The priority, however, remains to attract Ghanaians to the sport. The Backyard Community Club’s training programme is already receiving applications from players from different parts of the country. “The impact is far greater than this community,” says DeRoche. — MHO derocheprojects.com



7

Best design gallery | *Mexico*

Difane

17

This gallery is helping to redefine Mexico's design identity by championing the country's best contemporary practitioners.

The rise of Mexican design to global acclaim is thanks, in part, to the work of galleries such as Mexico City-based Difane. Run by Fernanda Salamanca and Andrea Gadsden, it supports the nation's independent designers, including Andrés Gutiérrez and Carlota Coppel. "When we started, most people around the world thought of Mexican design as just arts and crafts," says Gadsden. "We wanted to give visibility to this other branch."

From its permanent space in the Roma Norte neighbourhood, the gallery works with Mexican designers to co-develop products that push boundaries and speak to a global audience. "Mexicans create beautiful objects but don't always know how to sell them," says Salamanca. "What we do is look for good designs that can compete internationally." The result is a platform that fosters a community of creatives. — AME difane.com.mx



Best armchair



Best armchair | *Italy*

Eri Swivel by Fumie Shibata for Flexform

16

A combination of Japanese and Italian elements makes this chair stand out, whether in the living room or the boardroom.

The Eri Swivel armchair is a masterclass in harmonising structural integrity and sculptural appeal with a soft, enveloping form. Designed by Tokyo-based Fumie Shibata for Flexform, it reflects a pleasing coming together of Japanese minimalism and Italian manufacturing nous.

The Eri's silhouette gently curves around the body, creating cocoon-like comfort. The seat and back cushions are filled with goose down. The armchair comes with a swivel metal base (pictured) or finely crafted, hand-turned wood legs – a detail that neatly reflects Shibata's meticulous approach. — EGO flexform.it



Top urban intervention | *Thailand*

Suan San Pocket Park by Shma Design

18

This small, strategically placed green space offers a much-needed escape from the Thai capital's asphalt jungle.

The all-consuming urban sprawl is an unfortunate reality of life in Bangkok. Providing residents with respite from it was a challenge that the team at landscape-architecture studio Shma Design was keen to rectify with the creation of the Suan San Pocket Park. "This is an unplanned city, which means that we never really invested in green areas," says Yossaporn Boonsom, one of Shma Design's founding directors and the park's lead designer.

Despite its prime location next to the Chao Phraya river, much of the site had long been used as a dumping ground. A public consultation process revealed that it had once been a warehouse for

goods unloaded from the river; elsewhere, towering Banyan trees can be dated back about 100 years. After this history was uncovered, Shma Design decided to celebrate the area's heritage. The team preserved parts of the former warehouse building, integrating them within the park's walkways and facilities. The oldest and largest trees were retained too. Recreational areas are defined by floor patterns – a sports pitch, jogging paths and exercise zones. The open layout also creates an uninterrupted route to the river, connecting residents to the riverfront – a rarity in Bangkok.

Suan San Pocket Park offers a space for history, nature and community to co-exist, and affirms a sense of local identity. In a city where skylines and landscapes can quickly become unrecognisable, the park stands as a reminder that urban development doesn't always require starting from scratch – or being on a major scale. "The true value of the park shines not in its design but in how life has evolved around this space," says Boonsom. — PSP shmadesigns.com

PHOTOGRAPHER: Alejandro Ramirez Ortao



Best timekeeper | Denmark

Bedside clock by Habity

19

This nifty bedside clock doesn't just tell the time or wake you up in the morning: it'll help you to switch off at night too.

We appreciate this clock both for everything that it offers and for what it does away with – namely the need to download an app or fiddle with complex settings. Created by Copenhagen-based design company Habity, this compact alarm clock is intuitive to use and pleasing on the eye, thanks to its rounded shape and e-paper display.

At night, the clock plays calming ambient sounds to suit all tastes – from the trickling of a creek or a snowstorm's white noise to the dulcet tones of a snoring dog. In the morning, its light gradually brightens for a gentle wake-up call. — GCH *habity.design*

Best bicycle | Namibia

Bliksem by Onguza

20

Meticulously constructed and with every model custom finished for its rider, this bike proves that keeping people at the centre of a process can put you ahead of the peloton.

Dan Craven launched Namibian bike brand Onguza after he retired from the world of professional cycling in 2021. "As with so many ex-professional athletes, my future was unclear," says the company's founder and co-owner. But he was certain that he wanted to spotlight his homeland's manufacturing potential. "I've come to think of Namibia as a land of makers. Maybe because of the lack of resources or the harshness of our climate, we're exceptionally skilled at making things that last."

The Onguza factory in Omaruru, a small town in central Namibia, is led by co-owners and master builders Sakeus Nkolo and Petrus Mufenge. It produces bikes that are as visually striking as they are capable of high-speed adventures. The brand's Bliksem model (*pictured*) features a hand-built steel frame and fork that can be customised with different finishes and colourways. "The Bliksem is the culmination of three years of developing what we think a fast gravel bike should be: clean lines, functional elegance and with standout colour choices that reflect the rider's unique personality," adds Craven. Named after the Afrikaans word for "lightning", the Bliksem promises style and speed, even in harsh conditions.

"So few people expect Onguza to come from Namibia," he says. "For me, it has always been the unexpected places that have left the biggest impression. I wanted to show the world what Namibia is made of." To get this message out beyond Omaruru, Onguza partners with leading bike shops including London-based Via Atelier, which specialises in custom builds and bespoke installations of everything from hydraulic disc brakes to carbon wheel sets. — EGO *onguza.com*

In the frame

Every tube used in the bikes is hand-measured, cut and filed before being fillet brazed – a welding technique using brass or silver that prevents damage to the steel frame.



Custom made

Every Onguza frame set is constructed with Columbus steel tubing and is fully customisable, from paint job to parts.



Best civic renovation

Best civic renovation | Chile

Claro Arena by Idom

21

Stadiums aren't just sports facilities. Done well, they can foster a sense of community and even enhance landscapes – as this example shows.

Santiago's newly renovated Claro Arena pays tribute to its brutalist heritage. "We maintained 95 per cent of the sightlines," says Borja Gómez Martín, a lead architect at Spanish practice Idom, which transformed the landmark. Built in the 1980s, the stadium originally sat low in the terrain but Idom introduced a lighter frame that hovers above the concrete base. A new upper level incorporates dressing rooms, press centres, technical areas, premium hospitality spaces and viewing galleries with a concourse that operates as the ground's circulation system.

"We sought to understand how locals in the Las Condes neighbourhood interact with the stadium," says Gómez Martín. This allowed the architects to expand the stadium in a way that creates a lively atmosphere but is respectful of the surrounding residential neighbourhood, modernising the structure while maintaining what made it a place that fans have adored for generations. — JSI idom.com



Best industry event | UAE

Nomad Abu Dhabi

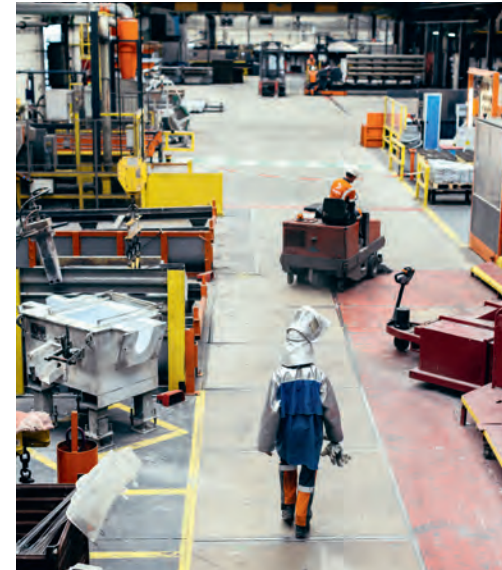
22



Nomad demonstrates what a design fair can achieve by embracing the architecture, geography and culture of its setting.

Nomad is one of the most compelling platforms in collectable design and its move into Abu Dhabi last year cemented its position as a benchmark global event for the sector. Its Middle Eastern debut in Zayed International Airport's decommissioned Terminal 1 felt almost like spatial theatre: works were staged not against neutral walls but within the emotional residue of a place once defined by movement.

"This concept is all about the experience," says Nomad's founder, Nicolas Bellavance-Lecompte. "It's not a pure fair, nor just an exhibition. It's the intersection of many things." Rather than defaulting to the white cube, every iteration of Nomad is embedded within a location that shapes the narrative. Abu Dhabi's edition shows that the future of the design fair lies not in bigger halls but in better settings. — IRA nomad-circle.com



Best material development | Norway

Hydro Circal 100R

23

Hydro's commitment to circularity offers a shining example of what real progress looks like in the materials sector.

Norwegian raw-materials supplier Hydro's Circal 100R initiative seeks to elevate the status of aluminium and build more circular economies. It also showcases how a global manufacturer can both recycle and produce on a local scale. Scrap is refined into Hydro Circal aluminium, made from 75 per cent post-consumer waste, and turned into bespoke furniture and lighting pieces constructed within a 100km radius of one of the Norwegian firm's European manufacturing facilities.

"We had to find new partners for bending and anodising within that radius," says Hydro's business-development manager for the Benelux region, Yon van den Oever, when he shows Monocle around one of the firm's facilities in the Dutch city of Drunen, just ahead of the country's annual design week in Eindhoven. Here, everything from crushed window frames to streetlight poles are being melted, purified and extruded into aluminium profiles before designers turn them into covetable wares. The result, presented at Dutch Design Week, is a model for how materials industries can evolve to have a bigger focus on tighter supply chains, closer partnerships and designing for reuse from the start. — PBU hydro.com; r-100.no

PHOTOGRAPHER: Melissa Schriek. IMAGES: Nikita Berezinoy



1. A Hydro aluminium processing facility
2. Safety first
3. The Orbit light by Sabine Marcelis
4. Keiji Takeuchi's sleek Profil chair

Monocle Top 25



1. James Corner, the founder of Field Operations
2. Overlook Walk and the Salish Steps
3. Drinking and dining outposts line the park
4. Views to the Puget Sound
5. Streets designed with pedestrians in mind
6. A moment's pause



Best in urbanism | USA

Seattle Waterfront Park by Field Operations 24

A team of landscape architects, urban designers and planners has reinvigorated Seattle's ailing downtown by reconnecting residents to a long ignored waterfront.

In recent decades, many landscape architects and urbanists across the globe have been trying to reconnect cities cut up by urban infrastructure. US studio Field Operations has long been at the forefront of this movement and its work in Seattle has established a new benchmark. The 1950s Alaskan Way Viaduct separated the city's downtown from the watery edge of the Puget Sound. Today the elevated highway, which was damaged by an earthquake in 2001, has come down and a park has arisen in its place, designed by Field Operations.

Monocle meets the firm's founding partner and CEO, James Corner, atop the



PHOTOGRAPHER: Alana Paterson

site's signature feature: the Overlook Walk, a collaboration with LMN Architects. People crowd the Salish Steps, a cascading set of stairs with the downtown skyline as backdrop. "It was always our aim to splice nature with the city, merging Seattle urbanism with Puget Sound naturalism," he says. The park has reinvigorated an ailing downtown and served as a proving ground for ecological recovery in an urban industrial setting.

As people wander down pathways past groves of Oregon grape and Pacific Northwest alliums, boats cruise past the refreshed Elliott Bay seawall. Field Operations designed new panels with ribbed walls and shelves to mimic natural habitats. The result is a bustling ecosystem of algae, barnacles, mussels and kelp that attracts migrating salmon. "When the viaduct was here, the city was cut off from this massive asset," says Corner. "They knew the bay was there but they didn't pay any attention to it as a thing of scenic beauty." Field Operations' work shows how landscape architects can bring beauty to the fore, celebrating the city and supporting its people. — GSC fieldoperations.net

Monocle Top 25



Design
Awards
2026



Fully charged
The Tatamel Bike's electric battery can be used as a portable power source, capable of charging devices or serving as back-up during outages, further underlining its flexibility.

SHIRT by *Uniqlo* and *JW Anderson*, TROUSERS by *Uniqlo*, SOCKS by *Yahae*, TRAINERS by *Last Resort AB*, HELMET by *Arai*

Monocle Top 25

Smartest mobility solution | *Japan*

Tatamel Bike by Icoma

25

The best design solutions emerge from everyday frustrations – and, like this collapsible bike, quietly change how a city moves.

About a decade ago, industrial designer Takamitsu Ikoma had an idea for an electric-powered two-wheeler that could be collapsed to the size of a suitcase and kept near the front door of a flat or under a desk at the office. Without an engine, it wouldn't reek of petrol fumes or leak chain grease. His Tokyo-based start-up, Icoma, put the idea into production in 2024 with the foldable electric Tatamel Bike (*tatameru* means "foldable"). It has proved a hit – there's a six month waiting list – and has a top speed of 45km/h. "In the city, most people travel an average distance of 10km to 20km at a time," says Ikoma, so it's perfect for urban streets. — KH
icoma.co.jp

PHOTOGRAPHER: *Kohsei Take*. STYLIST: *Akio Hasegawa*. MAKE-UP: *Noritaka Noda*. MODEL: *Kou*

The winners

1 — 25

- 01 Robert Plumb Collective with Dangar Barin Smith**
Best landscape and construction | *Australia*
- 02 Lombard Odier**
Best headquarters | *Switzerland*
- 03 Turntable PP-1 by Waiting for Ideas**
Best in audio | *France*
- 04 Pierre-Alexis Guinet**
Leading creative director | *France*
- 05 Håndvaerkskollegiet Herning**
Best trade school | *Denmark*
- 06 Bothi**
Best in lighting | *The Netherlands*
- 07 Monade**
Best design imprint | *Portugal*
- 08 Tilla Theus**
Legacy architect | *Switzerland*
- 09 Andu Masebo**
Designer-maker | *UK*
- 10 Chamber of Notaries**
Best government building | *France*
- 11 Zürich Print Institute**
Printer of choice | *Switzerland*
- 12 Fujifilm Instax Mini Evo Cinema**
Best camera | *Japan*
- 13 After by Fritz Hansen**
Best dining chair | *Denmark*
- 14 Formafantasma**
Designers of the year | *Italy*
- 15 Backyard Community Club**
Finest for fitness | *Ghana*
- 16 Eri Swivel by Fumie Shibata for Flexform**
Best armchair | *Italy*
- 17 Difane**
Best design gallery | *Mexico*
- 18 Suan San Pocket Park by Shma Design**
Top urban intervention | *Thailand*
- 19 Bedside clock by Hability**
Best timekeeper | *Denmark*
- 20 Bliksem by Onguza**
Best bicycle | *Namibia*
- 21 Claro Arena by Idom**
Best civic renovation | *Chile*
- 22 Nomad Abu Dhabi**
Best industry event | *UAE*
- 23 Hydro Circal 100R**
Best material development | *Norway*
- 24 Seattle Waterfront Park by Field Operations**
Best in urbanism | *USA*
- 25 Tatamel Bike by Icoma**
Smartest mobility solution | *Japan*