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Emma Culinan

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News

Irish projects make the cut for design prize

EMMA CULLINAN

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WORLD ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL AWARDS:NINE IRISH projects have been shortlisted for this year's World Architecture Festival Awards. The awards were held for the first time last year when the top prize of WAF World Building of the Year Award went to Irish firm Grafton Architects for its faculty building at Luigi Bocconi University, Milan.

There were more than 630 entries this year from 81 countries. They were whittled down to a shortlist of 272 projects, and the winner will be chosen at the World Architecture Festival in Barcelona from 4th to 6th November.

Just as an Irish practice won the top prize last year for a building in Italy, so many of the Irish schemes up for the awards this year are by practices based abroad, in the UK and US. These include the O2 Dublin by UK practice Populous which converted The Point, adding in a vast modern auditorium and reorientating spaces in the existing building.

Another performance building, the Wexford Opera House, designed by UK firm Keith Williams Architects and architects from the OPW, is also up for an award (it has already won Opus, RIBA and RIAI architecture awards).

This project involved slotting a substantial auditorium (lined in black American walnut), a theatre, copper and aluminium flytower and ancillary spaces into Wexford's tight medieval streets.

An undulating white concrete bridge over a canal at Spencer Dock in Dublin is also up for an award. The Spencer Dock Bridge will eventually carry Luas trains over the Royal Canal to the O2 and Point Village.

The scheme was started by UK based Future Systems, run by Amanda Levete and her ex-husband Jan Kaplicky who died in January.

The project, due for completion next year, is now in the hands of Amanda Levete Architects which has another Irish project on the shortlist in the Future Projects category (which opens the floor to entries that are still at the design stage).

It is for a curved-roofed mews house in Dublin 4 punctuated with varying sized windows that will bring in dappled light to this artist's residence, along with more solid rays through an elliptical courtyard. This, too, is due for completion next year.

Another future project on the shortlist is the Grangegorman campus masterplan for DIT (Dublin Institute of Technology) and the HSE (Health Service Executive), by US firm Moore Ruble Yudell Architects Planners with Dublin practice DMOD Architects.

This covers a 73-acre north Dublin site – the former home of St Brendan's Psychiatric Hospital. DIT plans to move here in 2011 bringing its 40 disparate departments onto one campus.

Also looking to the future is a 110-bedroom floating hotel on the Liffey by Irish practice NMA Architects.

This will be covered in industrial, rusty-looking corten steel with a glass bar and restaurant on deck.

Also by the water is Scott Tallon Walker's Cobh Urban Design Feasibility Study which aims to create a public space along the waterfront from Rushbrooke to Cobh fort.

Recently finished Irish projects on the shortlist include Rush Library, in a converted church, by McCullough Mulvin Architects.

It has a white lime plaster and walnut interior with a hole in the ceiling to access celestial light.

The inclusion of Bohermore House – a simple, stepped concrete home in Kilkenny by Boyd Cody Architects – shows that this

competition is very much about pitching the small, if solidly established, guys against the world's biggest practices. That was what was so breathtaking about Grafton Architects (popular) win last year.

"The WAF Awards, unusually, allow architects to showcase work on the same international platform, whether they are inspirational start-up practices or established international leaders," said Paul Finch, WAF programme director.

At the festival in Barcelona in November architects will have to pitch their projects to the judges.

Architecture is not just about being able to design, it also involves selling work to clients and this way of judging will test that ability – often architects who also teach are the best at this.

There are 45 awards up for grabs and some of these will then go before a "super jury" of big-name architects including Rafael Vinoly, Sir Peter Cook, Kengo Kuma and Will Alsop, for the World Building of the Year Award. Can Ireland do it again?

www.worldarchitecturefestival.com

IRISH PROJECTS ON SHORTLIST

The O2 Dublin

Populous, UK

Wexford Opera House

Keith Williams Architects, UK, and OPW, Ireland

Bohermore House, Kilkenny

Boyd Cody Architects, Ireland

Rush Library, Dublin,

McCullough Mulvin Architects, Ireland

Spencer Dock Bridge, Dublin Docklands

Amanda Levet Architects, UK

Floating Hotel, Dublin Docklands

NMA Architects, Ireland

Cobh Urban Design Feasibility Study

Scott Tallon Walker, Ireland

Grangegorman Masterplan, Dublin

Moore Ruble Yudell Architects Planners, USA, and DMOD Architects, Dublin

House in Dublin 4

Amanda Levet Architects, UK

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