

Back to the Future



15 Years of Dutch Design Awards

Be the Future

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Dutch Design Awards – reason enough for Dutch Design Foundation, the organization behind Dutch Design Week, to celebrate with the publication that you are holding. Since 2003, the Dutch Design Awards have fulfilled a notable role as *the* prizes for the best of Dutch design. Together, the award show, an exhibition of all the finalists' work during Dutch Design Week and this publication form a platform for Dutch design's full spectrum.

Back to the Future

In 2003, the Association of Dutch Designers (BNO) and DesignLink took the initiative to launch the first Dutch Design Awards. Year in, year out, designers and the clients who commission them have been invited to submit their best work.

In the run-up to the jubilee – and based on our *Back to the Future* theme – the archive of over 700 designs and projects from the last 14 years of Dutch Design Awards was opened up, digitalized and published. The resulting *Dutch Design Gallery* gives a picture-perfect overview of the best Dutch design from 2003 to the present. Looking back, a hopeful picture of the future is created, with the full breadth and depth of the field demonstrated by excellent projects and talents.

Dutch Design Today

From the outset of the Dutch Design Awards, a yearly catalogue was published to showcase the nominated people and their projects. Between 2008 and 2015, this catalogue became one with the *Dutch Design Yearbook*. In 2016, DDA and Glamcult Studio launched *Dutch Design Today*. And then we arrive in 2017...

In the first part of this year's *Dutch Design Today*, entitled *Be the Future*, you'll find a well-documented overview of this year's nominees. But first Marcus Fairs, editor-in-chief of *Dezeen* and international ambassador of Dutch Design Week 2017, preludes their work

with an introspective essay. For the second part of the publication, *Back to the Future*, we approached the current jury chairmen, a number of former members of (international) DDA juries throughout the years and authors who previously contributed to the *Dutch Design Yearbook*. All were asked to reflect on the *Dutch Design Gallery* and write a personal, critical essay on design's recent history. We also took the liberty of portraying a small selection of winners from past editions. This selection is explicitly arbitrary, and we are grateful to the designers and design agencies for relinquishing the images.

Thank You

The Dutch Design Awards 2017 were made possible, above all, by the generous support of the City of Eindhoven, who have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to the Dutch Design Awards in the past years and without whom DDA would not be celebrating this anniversary. Many thanks also to Dutch Design Foundation and sponsors such as Volvo Car Cooperation and Hotel NH Collection Eindhoven. Our special gratitude goes to the Dutch Design Association (BNO) and Pictoright for their support.

This anniversary edition of *Dutch Design Today* had not seen the light without the efforts and collaboration of more than a few people, including Martijn Paulen, Edwin Schenk, Raffaella Vandermuhlen, Tim Vermeulen, Ellen Ras, Heidi van Heumen, Paul van Mameren, Madeleine van Lennep, Timo de Rijk and of course Lisa Hardon, the DDA team and – last but not least – Glamcult Studio.

A special word of thanks goes to the various authors and members of the jury who were willing to write their essays in an exceptionally short period of time. And finally, we fully realize that we could and would not celebrate 15 years of Dutch Design Awards without the brilliant work of more than 700 nominees.

Job Meihuizen
Project manager, Dutch Design Awards

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Relevant lessons from Uruzgan

During the judging process, the committee chairmen of the Dutch Design Awards can't let their preference shine through too explicitly. Only after the final selection has been made are they able to speak freely. For Eline Strijkers, chairwoman of the Design Research and Habitat categories as well as co-founder of the architectural office DoepelStrijkers, *Uruzgan's Legacy* by Jan Willem Petersen is the most impressive Design Research project in the 15 years of DDA.

A few years ago Petersen, an architect, asked himself: "How are the numerous ventures of the Netherlands' 'Task Force Uruzgan' faring today?" Between 2006 and 2010, this Dutch mission – founded to rebuild the eponymous Afghan province – built schools, roads, medical stations and an airport terminal. Some projects were successful, but more often than not they were abandoned or never functioned at all.

Petersen, driven by his interest in crisis regions, travelled through the province garbed in traditional Afghan clothes and with a full beard, visiting the Dutch mission's many efforts to speak to locals and meet regional authorities. For his study *Uruzgan's Legacy*, which he presented to the Dutch Chief of Defence last year, he selected some 20 projects to thoroughly analyse. During the process he asked himself: "How can design and architecture contribute to the sustainable legacy of reconstruction and recovery projects?"

The power of visual language

Eline Strijkers immediately felt a special affinity with *Uruzgan's Legacy*. "The way Jan Willem Petersen works is closely related to the way our agency works. We focus on sustainable architecture and interior projects that contribute to more comfortable, healthy environments. As such, we see design as a research-focused cultural activity. And we constantly try to find new methods to nourish this working approach – which, in the long run, will result in a reshaping of design."

According to Strijkers, the past 15 years of Dutch Design Awards show how far design research has come. "At the start of this century the picture was much more unequivocal and research was solely focused on the technical questions of design." About ten years ago, Strijkers asserts, projects shifted towards new themes, such as lack of occupancy. Through research, designers started trying to offer a solution and find new purposes for vacant buildings. Today, designers question and consider the term "sustainability". Strijkers explains: "We ask ourselves, for instance, how we can create socially inclusive projects. I see designers bringing up this question, but there isn't enough access to sufficient supporting tools yet to translate it into a strong visual language.

"If you want to build sturdy, circular, socially inclusive projects, you have to create connections with local values," Strijkers states. Circularity – the new sustainability – involves, among other things, sourcing materials from your own direct environment so they can be re-used and reapplied. Additionally: "Inclusivity means that people are engaged with a project and benefit from it. This demands a new approach from architects and architects, as they have to understand that the conditions under which a project is established are variable. What precedes this understanding is research."

Mindboggling

There's a huge difference between the project conditions that Jan Willem Petersen describes in *Uruzgan's Legacy* and the conditions for construction in the Netherlands, but the lessons he draws from his research are equally relevant here. One of his important findings is that many projects fail because they aren't socially embedded and are often established without the help of an architect or a designer specialized in urban planning. Strijkers stresses that *before* the sketchbook or computer is opened a designer should research the conditions and cultural values of a construction site. "Only through this type of research will one discover what is truly needed. For the projects in Uruzgan it was mostly the military or representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who decided what and how reconstruction was carried out," says Strijkers. "This is, in fact, mindboggling, and Petersen's recommendation to directly involve

architects and spatial designers in these types of projects is only a matter of logic." Projects should never begin with the practical design but rather with research, Strijkers concludes:
"This is something designers should insist upon with their clients."

Words by Marc Vlemmings

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