

NEWS FROM:



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UCT students win lion's share of awards in international landscape architecture competition

Three landscape architecture Masters students from the University of Cape Town have won three out of four awards at a recent International Federation of Landscape Architecture (IFLA) competition.

The Student Design Competition awards were held at the 2011 IFLA Africa Symposium on Landscape Architecture Education and Practice, 5-7 October 2011, at the Africa Institute for Capacity Development in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ke Lu, Ancunel Anna-Lucia Steyn and Julia McLachlan took first place, runner up, and most "environmentally responsive design award" respectively. Their directive was to redesign a portion of the Nairobi River running through the centre of Nairobi, and propose creative solutions to the challenges facing cities and the design and planning of rivers that flow through them.

Professor Francis Petersen, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment, said: "As a faculty, our ultimate aim is to produce graduates who can think beyond the obvious to find new solutions to society's challenges. These three landscape architecture students are prime examples of the type of student we wish to graduate."

UCT is one of only six African universities currently offering professional programmes in landscape architecture. The capacity for landscape architecture is growing rapidly internationally with university degree programme numbers doubling in the past decade.

"The excellent performance of the landscape architecture students evidences and cements the programme's stature nationally and internationally," said Professor Alta Steenkamp, Head of the School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics at UCT. "The students in this programme are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and the work recognised in this competition illustrates the effectiveness of the programme in fostering design ability and critical thinking."

For environmental journalists: the winning projects

Ke Lu won first place (prize: \$1000) for his project, titled: Reincarnation Landscape. He said: "This project not only seeks to reinvigorate the river as a healthy natural system, but also to design it so that the natural systems associated with it become powerfully visible and apparent to people engaging with the river. This creates the opportunity for people to learn about natural processes. The idea is to empower the community living directly adjacent to the river, and to tie the river as far as possible into their daily lives, resulting in the development of a kind of ecological culture. Sustainable development is pursued through an array of appropriate systems design including water, energy, materials, vegetation, and soil systems."

Ancunel Anna-Lucia Steyn was named runner-up (prize: \$600) for her project titled: Metamorphosis: Transforming River, Transforming Lives. She said: "The lifecycle of the butterfly is used to inform and illustrate the different stages of the incremental transformation of the Nairobi River and its immediate surroundings. Nairobi is known for its butterflies. Connecting insects or animals to the river transformation project makes the revitalisation of the river more tangible and less abstract. Butterflies can also be used as a kind of indicator species for the river's health."

Julia McLachlan took the "Most environmentally responsive design" award (prize: \$500) for her project titled: Flowing Waters: Cultural and Knowledge Streams. She said: "This design proposal seeks to reveal the ecological, functional and experiential value of the Nairobi River as part of our critical natural water systems. It functionally and spatially links the river into the surrounding city fabric of downtown Nairobi by providing 'Cultural and Knowledge Streams' that offer outdoor spaces that take their functional cue from the adjacent city activities."

Photos of the winning submissions are available upon request.

Caption to accompany attached photograph: From left: Julia McLachlan, Ke Lu, and Ancunel Steyn of UCT's Landscape Architecture Masters programme. Photo credit: Gideon Roos

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