

PAM-Tan Sri Ar Chan Sau Lai Architecture Award 2014



Judges and finalists at the award ceremony, with KL Mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal in the centre

An elegant Waiting Space bags top prize

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BY ELENA TUNKU SHERIE

Good architecture has always been about creativity, curiosity and imagination. And the entry of University of East London's Fairuz Abdul Aziz for the PAM-Tan Sri Ar Chan Sau Lai Architecture Award 2014 was good enough to bag him the top prize from among 32 submissions, 10 of which were shortlisted.

The theme for this year's competition — open to all Malaysian architecture students within as well as outside the country — was Urban Renewal.

Fairuz's design, called Waiting Space, rethinks the idea of a waiting space for hospital patients, and proposes the introduction of garden courtyards and a theatre.

"What inspired me were the people and the site. At a hospital, you see so many sick, waiting patients. I want to make them happy, like in the movie *Patch Adams*," he says. "It's about healing without medication, healing the psychological state of the patients. A cheerful environment would induce some psychological relief."

His win, he says, came as a surprise as the other entries — from home-grown universities as well as architecture schools from the UK and Australia — were so good.

"I was very surprised but happy of course. Competitions are a great way for people to strive to be better. It's a good platform."

According to award founder Tan Sri Chan Sau Lai, "The winner this year wants a better environment for the patients and he presented it well, and the design was of course very good. Fairuz's proposal is a sensitive and elegant solution to this site. It is contemporary in form and blends in well with the River Thames and surrounding architecture." Sau Lai, who is executive chairman of Benetton Properties, was one of the judges.

The other judges were PAM president Chan Seong Aun, past PAM president and award co-founder Boon Chee Wee, PAM deputy president and Education Committee chairman Mohd Zulhemlee



The panel of judges (from left): Sau Lai, Seong Aun, Chalay, Tan, Zulhemlee and Boon



Fairuz with his winning design

An, Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) Gold Medalist 2013 Tan Cheng Siong and Arcasia Committee of Architecture Education (ACAE) chairman Dr Chalay Kunawong.

"The primary aim of this award is to be an inspirational platform that recognises outstanding achievements in design by architectural graduates," says Seong Aun. "The competition gives young architects an opportunity to shine and display their design talent. With this recognition, they can move forward faster as they gain due recognition for their design architectural works."

Zulhemlee says the competition allows the candidates to be judged by pro-

fessionals in the industry and thereby allows them to set a certain standard for themselves.

Boon says competitions help to draw the best out of architects and push them forward to be recognised. "Not only does it give them a benchmark, it enhances their confidence. Especially for students, this is the time for them to explore their creativity."

The competition is now in its third year, and the judges hope to see more entries for the next competition.

"I think that one way we could do this is by working with the schools to encourage the students to participate," says Zulhemlee.

Sau Lai feels the lack of entries could stem from a lack of confidence. "Some may feel that their projects are not good enough to enter a competition, and that needs to change. Of course, some are just bogged down by other life issues."

To attract more participants, "reaching out to more universities is something that we are looking into," says Boon. "That's why the competition is open to all Malaysian students, even if they are studying outside the country. They can submit their entries and we can conduct the interviews via Skype. They don't have to fly to and fro."

Zulhemlee's advice to the candidates is to work hard and challenge their capabilities. "Architecture is challenging and rewarding at the same time. The best time to explore is during their studies."

Commendation prizes were awarded to Mohd Edzuan Abd Rahman from Universiti Sains Malaysia (Revitalization of Sungai Pinang as a Tourism Centre), Michele Julieana Vaz of Universiti Putra Malaysia (Kota Damansara Memorial) and Choong Wei Li from Limkokwing University (Bio-Scape Terminal Georgetown Waterfront Design).

The other finalists included three students from Universiti Putra Malaysia — Muhamad Razaki Jusoh (Rejuvenate Dayabumi By Petronas Motorsport Galleria), Saidal Khadri Abu Kassim (Therapotel D'Gurney) and Mohd Syafiq Dahlan (Putrajaya People Bureau) — as well as Low Choon Yong of Taylor's University (Larut War Memorial) and Chan Yen Fei from Universiti Sains Malaysia (Partially Submerged Dive Resort).