

REALISM AND EXCELLENCE



ABOVE JURORS KAREN MARLER, MARC SIMMONS AND MARIANNE MCKENNA CAREFULLY EVALUATE THE 208 SUBMISSIONS TO THE 2013 AWARDS PROGRAM, MANY OF WHICH GENERATED SUBSTANTIAL DISCUSSION.

THE 46TH CANADIAN ARCHITECT AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE RECOGNIZE 11 PROJECTS THAT OFFER THOUGHTFUL AND REALISTIC INTERVENTIONS INTO URBAN ENVIRONMENTS AND RURAL LANDSCAPES.

Canadian Architect has long been known as a magazine of record, documenting work after the construction dust has settled and polished photographs have been produced. However, once a year since 1968, the magazine looks towards the future, recognizing commissioned yet unbuilt projects along with exceptional student proposals. During the design phase, projects often exhibit clarity of intention, innovation and ambition to a degree that can be later compromised by the demands and constraints of construction.

This year's jurors—Karen Marler, Marianne McKenna and Marc Simmons—selected 11 award winners whose proposals embodied qualities of innovation and overall design excellence that, with the proper support of both architect and client, would realistically translate into built work. As McKenna notes, "In terms of selecting the Awards of Excellence, we were looking for the combination of qualities that anticipated that the eventual built work would produce architecture of substance, that was responsive to local context, program and climate."

According to Simmons, the jury was particularly seeking projects with "controlled discipline" that "stand out in terms of their aspirations in the

contemporary Canadian design landscape." McKenna was critical of work that "appeared to be derivative." She says, "We saw many of the same forms coming up repeatedly. The projects that were selected for awards were ones that were solidly grounded in an understanding of the site, and placed program to create a thoughtful narrative with clear ideas about how to create community through architectural form and space."

The selected projects traverse geographies, including the recognition of initiatives in rural middle Canada, an important area of population growth with its burgeoning resource industries. "It's important to recognize that two-thirds of Canadians live in the southern region of the country—but there's another set of people that live in the other two-thirds of our land base," says Marler. "So we need to understand and engage with the good things that are happening in the northern communities." The jury drew on their broad collective experience to evaluate projects where remote location, shortage of skilled labour, and demanding climactic conditions posed distinct parameters for architectural merit.

In terms of building types, Marler notes, "The main building typologies

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DIALOG



PERKINS+WILL CANADA



DIALOG

TOP THE JURY COMMENDED THE DESIGN INVOLVEMENT OF DIALOG IN WAGNER STATION, A LIGHT-RAIL TRANSIT STOP FOR THE CITY OF EDMONTON. **MIDDLE** FOR OTTAWA'S LIGHT-RAIL TRANSIT, PERKINS+WILL CANADA CREATED A VOCABULARY OF PARTS THAT COULD BE DEPLOYED ACROSS THE SYSTEM, AN APPROACH THAT THE JURY WOULD HAVE LIKED TO SEE DEVELOPED FURTHER. **BOTTOM** THE UBC DISTRICT ENERGY CENTRE BY DIALOG WAS NOTED AS A MANNERED ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH TO AN INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING.

that we observed in the award submissions this year can be summarized into relatively few categories. These were infrastructure, pavilions, single-family homes, and ultimately, civic and institutional projects were a strong player." Marler, along with the other jurors, was "disappointed by the lack of private-sector multi-use residential projects," a category that has garnered several *Canadian Architect* awards in past years, and which saw only a modest number of submissions in the current round relative to the prominence of this building sector.

On the other hand, the jury was cheered by a series of submissions that involved architects in infrastructural development, even though these projects did not rise to the level of excellence they deemed requisite for award recognition. "It was interesting to see the first waves of new transit initiatives that are beginning to happen in Canada, such as in the submission for Wagner Station in Vancouver and the Ottawa Light Rail project," says McKenna, who serves on the Board of Directors for the Toronto-area agency Metrolinx. "In the Ottawa example, the designers are looking for a typology of elements that then can be used across the length of the system, which seems the correct approach to developing better accommodation, legibility, and elegant and repeatable solutions to encourage transit use. In this case, we remarked upon the short timeframe that the architects have been given to develop a system for transit that will be with us for many decades. How do we get to design excellence? 'Good enough' should not be acceptable for these kinds of public initiatives and we need to support respectful processes to achieve excellence."

Marler continues, "Another infrastructure piece that we saw was the UBC District Energy Centre. You have to applaud the institution for taking the step of bringing architects to a project that's effectively an energy plant in the middle of campus and giving it an architectural overlay. Generally speaking, at UBC the quality of architecture has increased exponentially over the last few years, particularly with the infrastructure projects and the public realm." Says Simmons, "In the UBC District Energy example, while it's a great achievement to decide that these infrastructure buildings actually need designed enclosures and a process is in place to do that, maybe that process needs to be pushed further in terms of ambition, because it's quite mannered as an actual design."

Throughout the jury process, there was recognition that support for architectural excellence is necessary from multiple levels. "We need champions of design excellence, from architects, clients and from the general public who, when it comes to infrastructure and institutional projects, should be asking for excellence," says McKenna. "As the world becomes more global and more competitive, public discourse in Toronto these days is engaged in a dialogue around what excellence means within the public realm and the urban fabric of our cities. I do think we are beginning to see an appreciation of the real value of the investment in innovation and design excellence from many sectors as they understand the need to improve the offering in transit infrastructure as well as in academic and community buildings. There is a lot of good new work in Canada but we still need to push harder, and be aware of what is happening elsewhere in Europe and the US."

All jurors expressed the hope that their choices would advance an overall culture of design excellence in Canada. Simmons notes, "In terms of design excellence, I don't think budget is the issue. I think it's actually a cultural and design question between the architects, the construction manager, and the ownership about what their ambition is collectively." McKenna concludes, "Given the material provided, it is often challenging to fully appreciate whether the final results will meet the architectural promise of the submissions. One hopes that these awards support the ambition of these projects and can be used to leverage the commitment of the early design work." **CA**



Karen Marler

Karen Marler, Architect AIBC, AAA, SAA, OAA, FRAIC, received her undergraduate degree from the University of Manitoba, studied architecture at the Architectural Association, and graduated with her professional degree from the Technical University of Nova Scotia in 1984. Shortly thereafter, she joined Roger Hughes Architects, a predecessor of Hughes Condon Marler Architects (HCMA), and in 1998 Karen became a partner. HCMA's work encompasses a broad range of project types, including recreation, education, civic, residential, commercial and cultural. The firm believes that better buildings, created by leveraging the power of design, contribute to better, stronger and healthier communities. This dedication to design excellence has been recognized by several Governor General's Awards, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia Awards, and *Canadian Architect* Awards of Excellence. A recognized leader in sustainable design, HCMA continually strives to develop architecture that integrates environmental, social and economic considerations. Their work is both regionally and nationally focused with active projects across Canada. These projects are contextual yet contemporary in their expression, practical yet innovative in their execution, and most frequently concerned with the articulation and enhancement of the public realm. Karen is a frequent guest critic and thesis advisor at the University of British Columbia School of Architecture. She has presented HCMA's work at the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, BC Institute of Technology, Urban Design Institute of BC, Canada Green Building Council conferences, and at International Living Future conferences. Karen was appointed a fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in 2010.



Marianne McKenna

Marianne McKenna, OC, OAA, OAQ, FRAIC, AIA, a founding partner of KPMB Architects, was born in Montreal and educated at Swarthmore College (B.A. 1972) and Yale University (M. Arch. 1976). In 2012 she was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada for making "architecture that enriches the public experience." Marianne has directed a diverse range of projects in the spheres of culture, education, business and hospitality. This work includes the recently completed Orchestra Hall Renewal in Minneapolis, Le Quartier Concordia (in joint venture with Fichten Soiferman et Associés, Architectes), an integrated vertical campus for Concordia University in Montreal, the Mike & Ophelia Lazaridis Quantum-Nano Centre at the University of Waterloo, the Rotman School of Management Expansion at the University of Toronto, the Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate Winery, and the Torys LLP offices in Toronto and Calgary. Marianne's internationally acclaimed design for the Royal Conservatory TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning and Koerner Hall earned KPMB its 11th Governor General's Medal, Canada's highest honour for architecture. In recognition of her achievement, Marianne was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Conservatory in 2011. Current projects include the revitalization of Toronto's historic Massey Hall and new buildings for the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and the new Computational Sciences Building at Boston University. In 2010 Marianne was named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women. She has taught at McGill University, the Université de Montréal and the University of Toronto, and lectured and acted as guest critic at Yale University. She has juried a range of art competitions for integrated artworks, and currently serves on the Board of Directors for Metrolinx.



Marc Simmons

Marc Simmons is a founding partner of F&S and is the Ventulett Chair in Architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology School of Architecture. He has more than 20 years professional work experience, and holds both a Bachelor of Environmental Studies and professional Bachelor of Architecture degrees from the University of Waterloo. Marc has been responsible as lead consultant for many seminal projects over the past decade. Projects include the Sea Grant Library with OMA/LMN, the new Wesleyan Canadian House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa with ARCOP/FGMD, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, the St. Niarchos Foundation National Library of Athens and the National Greek Opera with Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the China Central Television Tower HQ in Beijing with OMA, the Toledo Museum of Art with Sejima and Nishizawa, the Walker Art Center with Herzog & de Meuron and the Theater in Dallas with REX/OMA. Prior to 2008 Marc worked with the structural engineering firm Dewhurst Macfarlane & Partners as the principal and team leader responsible for the New York-based structural glass and façade design of many challenging projects that were executed throughout the USA and Europe. His specialist façade architecture work experience was built up through previous work at Meinhardt Façade Technology Foster and Partners, KPMB Architects and Takamatsu Architect. Marc also lectures on the subject of façade design and innovation. In addition to his previous seven-year tenure as a lecturer at the Princeton University School of Architecture, he has given presentations at numerous events worldwide, including the National University of Singapore, Technical University of Delft University, the 2008 Greenbuild Conference in Chicago, and at various AIA events.