ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Beautiful bodies of work

Ellis Woodman introduces this year's awards, which recognise the architects responsible for the best overall arrays of projects in 12 different sectors as well as the most promising young practice

All awards programmes take time to mature. The Architect of the Year Awards are now seven years old and with each one, the range and quality of the entries has increased. This year one can say with confidence that the winners really do reflect the very best practices at work in the 13 sectors under assessment.

The AYAs are distinguished from other architectural awards by virtue of the fact that they honour a body of work within a particular sector. That provides a truly meaningful premise on which to compare the achievements of different architects.

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The practice that has built the most isn't always judged the winner. What juries are often looking for is the firm that has done the most to shift expectations in its particular field, whether it is a small office or a team of hundreds.

That concern certainly guided the decision to award the Richard Feilden Architect of the Year Award to DSDHA, a practice that may be young but has nonetheless made a vital contribution in the field of school design. This is an area that has proved a particular focus of architectural activity in the UK over the past five years. Whether it remains so is currently far from clear but DSDHA's schools will continue to provide valuable models for future school building in this country.

DSDHA

EDUCATION ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR
(Nursery to secondary)
RICHARD FEILDEN ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR

Reflecting the large number of schools that have been built in the UK in the past couple of years, this category proved the most fiercely contested of all. DSDHA was ultimately judged the winner on account of the pair of extraordinary schools the practice has built on adjacent sites in Guildford.

These are very different institutions, Christ's College being a Church of England secondary school and Pond Meadow, a school for children with special needs. They have been conceived, however, as an ensemble which vividly communicates their significance to the wider community.

Runners-up

BDP
dRMM Architects
Haverstock Associates
John McAslan & Partners
Penoyre & Prasad

DSDHA's Pond Meadow Special Needs School (above) sits adjacent to the practice's Christ's College Secondary School (right) together forming an education campus in Guildford, Surrey.