

Belgian bench design project wins the Andrejsala design competition

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The year 2007 Andrejsala international design competition has announced its final winner in the project category of benches and litterbins: the design titled '*Swell... Well?*' by Damien Spies (Belgium). The runner-up is Ilze Začeste's '*Klampp*', while the third prize went to Ilze Vanaga and Jānis Neiders's '*Creative Sitting in Andrejsala*'. Real-life prototypes of all three designs are currently on display outdoors in the South End of Andrejsala.

"The second and final round of the competition ended on a positive note because all the contestants actually saw their designs implemented. The young designers were able to participate in the entire intricate process starting from creating a rough drawing of a bench and ending with the manufacturing of a functioning prototype. They have now personally experienced the interaction that takes place between the designer, the producer and the end-user. In the spring of 2008, we intend to order several copies of these designer benches and use them to improve Andrejsala's characteristic urban landscape, which will make it even more pleasant and interesting for visitors," explained Valters Māziņš, chairman of the board of SIA *Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums*.

The competition committee, which considered the contestants' submissions, highlighted the following advantages of the winning '*Swell... Well?*' submission: the use of environmentally friendly materials, the attractive and adaptable outline of the bench, the multifunctional potential, the professional technical execution as well as the suitability for the existing environment.

Arta Goldberga, head of the Department of Urban Environment Design of the Rīga City Building Authority, commented: "The '*Swell... Well?*' design shows the strongest potential for expanding and further variation. It offers several different types of utilisation: sitting, lounging and recreational use by children and adults." According to Valters Māziņš, "The choice of good-quality, traditional materials might mean that a bench of this type will prove to be both durable and easy to maintain. This design idea might be easily applicable also to the various other parts of Andrejsala, by adapting the various dimensions, such as the height and frequency, of the wave-like shapes."

The runner-up turned out to be a design titled *Klampp*, which was described as a "perfect prototype": modern, eye-catching, sleek, well designed and technologically correct. However, in the panel members' opinion, this design lacked sturdiness and its proportion would not match the target environment. *Klampp* was nevertheless singled out as a fine example of interior design and will probably fit in inside a building or on a quiet patio.

The third award was conferred to *Creative Sitting in Andrejsala*. "This bench is conceptually well developed, yet its material and technical implementation strays away from the proposed function," noted designer Holgers Elers. This was seconded by other members of the panel who said that, although the drawings of the design express confidence in the idea, physical form and colour, certain concerns might arise regarding its durability, weatherproofing and modularity aspects.

The year 2007 Andrejsala international design competition took place from March 28 till September 21, totalling twenty-six different submissions of design projects of outdoor benches and litterbins. The winners will be awarded the following prizes: 1200 lats to the winning submission; 800 and 400 lats to the second and third best designs respectively.

"I am most pleased by the fact that the awards went to talented and capable young people," commented landscape architect Silvija Rubene. "Design competitions are very useful both for improving our environment and for refining the taste of general public. They in particular benefit young artists, architects and other members of the creative community," stressed Rubene.

The expert panel who evaluated the submissions included architect Ieva Zībārte, designer Holgers Elers, architect Uldis Lukševics, head of the Urban Environment Design Department of the Rīga City Building Authority Arta Goldberga, landscape architect Silvija Rubene, project manager of 'Dizaina informācijas centrs' Inese Pētersone, chairman of the board of SIA 'Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums' Valters Māziņš, as well as Doctor of Arts Tuula Isohanni from the School of Visual Culture (Helsinki) and Tuuli Sotamaa, designer and head of exhibitions, University of Art and Design Helsinki.