

Who's In The Running For MIPIM's Property Oscars?

It's gongs galore at the big property festival in Cannes



THE property world ships out to the South of France next week for its annual four days of showing off and networking at MIPIM in Cannes.

Germany is this year's country of honour. Obviously.

It's what mainland Europe seems to do so naturally and one of the lessons in Cannes is walking down the main route down to La Croisette and seeing the neighbourhood blocks each with their own array of local shops, an office dotted here and a motorbike repair shop there and a little park every so often where minature dogs are walked by the elderly and young children play.

The gathering is also an excuse to have the Property Oscars with winning schemes chosen by a panel of peers and popular vote.

In 2008 Urban Splash's Chimney Pot Park in Salford was named as the Best Residential Development. In the world.

No British schemes make the cut this year.

But it's interesting to see what the property industry judges to be the very best new homes that can be built anywhere.

First up is Midi-Suede next to the Gare du Midi TGV station in Brussels.

In what could be a blue-print for what is coming in Manchester it offers 30 subsidised residential units built to "passive house" standards in a public- private partnership between the developer BPI and SDRB, Brussels Regional Development Agency.

They have no qualms that this is to provide "middle-class housing in an urban setting" and architects Urban Platform aimed to make it blend in with the local neighbourhood while offering a modern interpretation of the classic bow-window style found in Brussels.

The second finalist is also European, this time in the Claude Bernard area in Paris where architects Atelier Zundel & Christea have designed a truly mixed use scheme for the developer BNP Paribas Real Estate.

The white glazed-brick building has an art deco air and mixes 28 family sized homes and 104 private care homes for the elderly alongside local shops and a chunk of office space.

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Again this new building is built to consume low energy and is next door to a main transport hub which has metro/tram/RER train and bus. Another lesson.

The third finalist is at Keppel Bay, Singapore where Daniel Libeskind's design studio has produced a scheme of six towers and 11 low rise villa blocks that fan out to deliver 1,129 luxury homes being developed by Keppel Land Ltd.

Spaces will range from a two bedroom apartment to a 1,236sqm penthouse but all get views of the ocean and a nearby golf course.

It is aimed at the leisure market being part of the Sentosa resort island which already has Universal Studios, a huge marina and VivoCity, Singapore's largest shopping mall.

In all the categories only two UK schemes have made the shortlist for the Awards but they are goodies.

The McLaren Production Centre at Woking, designed by Foster + Partners with Terence O'Rourke Ltd doing the planning consultancy and landscape architecture, is as far removed from a traditional car plant as its possible to be.

The building was completed last year and it is where the McLaren MP4-12C super sports car is made.

It is part of the group's corporate headquarters and as the statement rightly says it has "reinforced the reputation of the UK as an attractive region for investment. The result is a building that exists in harmony with its environment and demonstrates clear synergies with the McLaren Technology Centre. The McLaren Production Centre is a quantum leap in car manufacturing facilities unlike any other in the world."

The second is a new build hotel in London. Developed by Prime Development Ltd the Bulgari Hotel concept and interior was designed by Antonio Citterio, Patricia Viel and Partners and offers 85 guest rooms and suites plus a ballroom, private cinema, spa and fitness centre with a 25 m indoor pool.

But the scheme I love is one for the future, the air floating villas and suites designed by architects

FPA Franzina + Partners Architettura.

How do you deliver big fancy homes in Qatar without taking up too much land? You stack em high.

They came up with the idea of building two large lattice structures with hanging decks on which sit up to 50 luxury villas. The homes are big, have their own private outside space including a swimming pool. The villas partially overlap with the bottom of the transparent swimming pools giving some shade to the villa beneath.