

STUDENT PROFESSIONALS

Longstanding architecture competition goes online

The 1.618 Education Initiative (1.618), an annual design competition in its 28th year and aimed at third-year architecture and interior design students around South Africa, is written into the curricula of participating educational institutions. It is supported and sponsored by a well-known South African wood panel manufacturer. The competition continued during 2020, despite all the impediments of the COVID pandemic, surely a credit to both organisers and sponsor. This year the competition moved online for the first time.

📷 1.618 Education Initiative

A vital development intervention by the built environment, the 1.618 aims to nurture and recognise young talent, introduce students to real-world briefs and products, and encourage creative thinking.

"Our brief for the 2020 edition of the PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative was 'The pursuit of Balance'", explains Lian Markham, Communications Manager at PG Bison. "Students are given a brief - exactly as they would be on a real-world project - and submit their designs, which are judged by a panel of industry experts. Every year, we choose the site for the project based on where the previous year's winner was studying. The 2019 competition winner was Sanette de Villiers from Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth, so this year's brief focused on a site in Port Elizabeth."

The 2020 brief asked students to submit their ideas to transform a site in a community-based space for work and leisure in the Lower Baakens Valley, South End. In short, entrants needed to select a tenant or brand and design a fit-for-purpose space within the existing development, balancing the tenant/brand requirements with a social cause that would elevate the brand experience.

Livia Coetzee-Stein, Creative Executive at DHQ Interior Brand Architects, was one of the five competition judges and helped PG Bison to craft the 2020 brief.

"The theme - Pursuit of Balance - is about balancing the experiential component with

the actual site and its distinct elements," she says. "It's a very raw space, so I'm interested to see how the students are going to look at the tenant mix and who's there at the moment, and then what they can bring that's different and that will bring value. It's more than design - it's strategic thinking."

Coetzee-Stein was joined on the judging panel by Dale Friedman, associate at Paragon Interface and Phill Mashabane, founder and principal architect at Mashabane Rose Associates, both who have served as PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative judges before, as well as two new judges, Mardre Meyer, Creative Director and a partner at Source Interior Brand Architects, and Henk Marais, founding member and Director at Connect Architects.

"I believe strongly that supporting students is supporting the future of the design industry in this country," says Meyer, adding that being a judge is a way to help shape

these students, and thus the future of the industry.

"Our awards ceremony will take place online this year, which is something we've never done before, so we're working hard to ensure we keep our students engaged," says Markham. "There is a benefit in doing a digital ceremony instead of a gala event. We can include more of the students' special family and friends, allowing them to be part of celebrating South Africa's young architecture and design talent."

It's not only about attractive prizes and top honours. Previous winners and finalists of the PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative have gone on to receive job offers as a direct result of the competition, and to achieve successful careers. **T**

The awards will be announced on 11 November - look out for them. For further info, visit www.1sixoneeight.co.za



Livia Coetzee-Stein



Mardre Meyer



Mardre Meyer, new judge for 2020