

Stainless Steel Awards showcase local innovation and talent

The winners of the 2018 Sassta Columbus Stainless Awards were announced at a Gala Dinner in Fourways, Johannesburg on Thursday October 25, 2018. From the 189 entries from 53 different companies, the judges compiled a list of more than 60 finalists, from which 18 winners had to be chosen. *Peter Middleton* reports.

Anyone doubting South Africa's design, manufacturing, fabrication and technical abilities need only sift through a single sub-category of the Sassta Stainless Steel award entries to have their faith restored.

For the Category 2 Sector awards, for example, in the Agro-Processing, Food and Beverage sector, is an entry from Saturn Stainless Industries' for a world-first industrial percolator for efficiently extracting teas such as buchu, rooibos and safflower 'with higher efficiency and a 75% cost reduction compared to imported versions' – and this is entry 11 in the category, and did not make it into 'the finals'.

It was competing against multi-million rand plant and processing equipment from ND

Engineering and FP Engineering; along with food processing equipment specialists such as Anderson Engineering, Roar Construction, Logichem, Coldstar International and Chad-O-Chef; and suppliers of modern solutions such as Inox Systems with its innovative corrugated stainless steel tube.

Tough competition indeed!

The winner in this category? Pietermaritzburg-based Anderson Engineering for its Anderson Combo Emulsi Mixer (ACE Mixer), a three-stage multi-chamber modular hygienic design 'specifically developed for the homogenisation of products with poor miscibility and/or high viscosity' – one of many clear demonstrations that South African companies have the ability and capacity to develop innovative solutions for our processing industries.



Pulse, an architectural stainless steel sculpture designed and manufactured by Johannesburg-based Spiral Engineering for the Nike World Headquarters in the USA, won the Art Sector award.

"This year, perhaps more than ever, awards of this nature are essential as they celebrate the innovation, strength and durability of the South African stainless steel industry, despite the buffeting winds of change that have beset our country," said Sassta executive director John Tarboton in introducing the awards.

"Despite these challenges, entries ranged from locally manufactured stainless steel corrugated pipes to world-class architectural masterpieces to feats of engineering and inspiring stories of transformation and growth amongst our members," he added.

A particularly stunning piece of work called Pulse, an architectural stainless steel sculpture designed and manufactured by Johannesburg-based Spiral Engineering for the Nike World Headquarters in the USA, won the Art Sector award. Created from archived footage by mapping the movement and form of the runner, Sebastian Coe, this 22 m long stainless steel sculpture reveals, in 3D animation, Seb Coe's flowing stride as people move past it.

Pulse was conceptualised and manufactured here in South Africa before being shipped and reassembled outside Nike's Sebastian Coe Building in Beaverton, Oregon, USA.

The winning entry in the Architecture, Building and Construction category, Antonini

Darmon Architects, was the only non-south African winner. It was described by the judges as "an outstanding example of the use of stainless steel to create a beautiful architectural 'signature', true to form and function, which makes dramatic use of reflectivity and demonstrates an understanding of stainless steel's characteristics".

An extension to an existing building in France, it was built to archive documents from the libraries of universities and research centres in the Paris region, as well as from the French National Library. The building uses veined stainless steel, whose "brightness contrasts with the dullness of the original aluminium".

Isn't it wonderful for award winning architecture using modern materials to be associated with such ordinary use?

Commenting on the winner in the Business Excellence category, Fabrinorx, the judges said: "This award is justly deserved in light of this company offering sustained high-quality and customised services to the stainless industry for 25 years", while Runner Up, Sello's Gutters, was seen as a "great example of how transformation and a willingness to offer better service and to collaborate with fellow local suppliers, installers and service providers can have an all-round positive effect".

A new addition to the Awards was the Most Transformed Category, which pays tribute to those companies that have embraced change within their business structures. Looking at winner, Sky Hill Heavy Engineering, the judges said: "Through training and equity

partnerships, this company has transformed from a Level 5 B-BBEE company against the new codes in 2016/2017 to a Level 1 B-BBEE company today. Black females now own 30% and black males 21% of the company. The company is indeed transformed and has achieved this very rapidly."

The overall winner of the Sassta Columbus Stainless Awards for 2018 was Durban-based ND Engineering, a company with a passion for South African stainless steel. Not only did NDE achieve winning status in the Manufacturing Innovation and Duplex Stainless Steel categories, it was also first run-

ner up in the Welding category and received merit awards in both the Export Achievement and Agro-Processing categories.

"ND Engineering's management strategy eliminated waste, improved production times and quality and maximised project returns"; "A text book example of the company's mastery of the use of duplex stainless steel"; and "ND Engineering now exports more than 50% of its production" were some of the judges comments about its entries, which included: Tongaat Crystalliser; the Mondi Oxygen Reactor manufactured in SAF 2205 duplex; and the DuPont Acid Cooler Project.

"As an organisation, we have always tried to focus on doing the basics well. The term 'basics' is perhaps a little misleading, because we operate in an industry, economy and country that is anything but basic. Over the past two years, we have chosen to be mindful of the external factors that have plagued our industry, but also to actively focus on internal improvements to negate the effects. We have made a concerted effort to be positive in a difficult manufacturing environment and strategically we have decided to expand – when competitors are downsizing – with the intention of filling some noticeable capacity voids," said MD Elvis Green after receiving the award.

Summing up the importance of the Awards Tarboton concludes: "What's clear, is that far from being a nice-to-have, awards of this kind set a benchmark for local manufacturers and fabricators. They are also the perfect example of the role that 21st Century industry associations can play in fostering the growth of the sector they champion – in this case stainless steel!"

Congratulations to the winners, but all 189 entrants have demonstrated excellence and we thank them for reminding us just how bright our future can be. □



The overall winner of the Sassta Columbus Stainless Awards for 2018 was Durban-based ND Engineering. From left: Sassta Board Chair, Charles Cammell; ND Engineering MD, Elvis Green; and Sassta executive chairman, John Tarboton.



NDE's winning entry in the Duplex Stainless Steel category, the Mondi Oxygen Reactor, which, according to the judges, "demonstrates consistent mastery of the use of duplex materials".