

# Dawson flats win Riba prize

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SkyTerrace@ Dawson PHOTO: AARON POCOCK

## SCDA Architects' SkyTerrace@ Dawson has won a prestigious Architecture award

A Singapore Housing Board (HDB) project has won a prize from the prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (Riba) institution, joining a new global cohort of winners that include beautifully designed museums, art centres and office buildings.

SkyTerrace@Dawson, a five-block residential estate designed by multi-disciplinary architectural practice SCDA Architects, was one of 21 winners of the Riba Award for International Excellence this year.

These winning projects then went on to compete for the top award, the inaugural Riba International Prize.

There were six shortlisted finalists last month and a winner for the Riba's pick of the world's best new building will be announced on Nov 24.

Though SkyTerrace@Dawson is not in the running for the International Prize, SCDA's principal architect Chan Soo Khian, 54, says that recognition at any level from the 182-year-old professional architecture body is an honour.

The Award for International Excellence is a "special one", he adds, as SkyTerrace@Dawson was selected from a distinguished group of international projects.

The new Riba International Prize replaces the Riba Lubetkin Prize, which was awarded annually to a Riba member architect for a building outside the European Union. It was given out with the Riba Stirling Prize, the most prestigious architecture award in Britain.

Now, the Riba International Prize is open to any qualified architect worldwide.

Calls for entries started last year and buildings of any type, size and budget are eligible for the biennial award.

In a statement on its website explaining the change of award, the Riba writes: "Winners told us (the Riba Lubetkin Prize) was one of those nice-to-win prizes, but felt it didn't compare to the prestigious Stirling Prize and the Pritzker Prize, due to the relatively small field of competition."

After sifting through hundreds of submissions, the Riba Award committee picked 30 projects. The judges then visited the selected buildings before whittling down the list to 21 winners, including SkyTerrace@Dawson, for the Award for International Excellence. SCDA's win puts it in good company.

Other recipients include the Oita Prefectural Art Museum in Japan by Shigeru Ban Architects; and the Heydar Aliyev Center in Azerbaijan that has an arts, music and performance space, by Zaha Hadid Architects with DiA Holding.

Both architects, Mr Ban and the late Ms Hadid, had won the Pritzker Prize - architecture's equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

Winning the Award for International Excellence is a feather in the cap for the Singapore firm, which has received much praise for SkyTerrace@Dawson since it was completed last year.

From its facade, the Build-To- Order (BTO) project in the mature Queenstown neighbourhood is a contrast to HDB blocks, which are typically in bright colours.

The firm opted for a darker yet stylish scheme - the blocks are painted black and grey, with white outlines demarcating each unit.

The design encourages multi- generational living too. There are four- and five-room flats connected to a studio apartment via stairs and an internal door, though each pair of apartments has separate entrances as well.

The property is a green haven, featuring sky gardens and terraces.

SkyTerrace@Dawson has won other awards, including a Design Award in the Residential Project category at the Singapore Institute of Architects' Architectural Design Awards; and the top honour at the HDB Design Awards. Both awards were given out last year.

Mr Chan, whose firm is also behind high-profile projects such as the National Design Centre in Middle Road and the Soori High Line, a luxury condominium in New York, praises the Housing Board for pushing boundaries with public housing design.

"Singapore's public housing has been consistently recognised as one of the best in the world. It seems to me that the Housing Board continually seeks to address and improve amenities for the community within its masterplan."

Aside from SCDA's project, home-grown architecture practice Woha's Parkroyal on Pickering hotel in Chinatown was also up for consideration for the Award for International Excellence, but did not win.

Mr Chan says that Singapore firms gunning for top awards have "helped put Singapore on the global design map".

"Woha and SCDA have different approaches to our respective projects, but it's healthy to have peers who do good work. That, in turn, motivates and pushes you."

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