

2020 PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative winner

The winner of the 28th annual PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative was named at the event's first-ever digital awards gala ceremony yesterday, 11 November 2020. Following an introduction of all the top 10 finalists, the 2020 winner was announced as Armand Barnard, interior design student at Design Time School of Interior Design in Cape Town.



Armand Barnard, 2020 PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative winner

Barnard wins a cash prize of R50,000, as does his lecturer, Anel Joubert, who is thrilled, given that all three of the top finishers are from Design Time School of Interior Design. Sarah Jane Sperryn scooped second place, winning R25,000, and Dillon Titus took third place and R10,000. The remaining seven finalists each received a cash prize of R2,000.

The PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative is aimed at third-year architecture and interior design students, with the objectives of nurturing and recognising young talent, introducing students to real-world briefs and products, and encouraging creative thinking.

“Firstly, I am so honoured to have been chosen as a finalist and winning first prize is nothing short of sensational,” says Barnard, who plans to use his prize money to help pay off his study loan. “This really creates opportunities within the design/architectural world in terms of clout regarding one’s portfolio and CV when entering the working world.”

Competition brief

The 2020 brief asked students to transform a site in a community-based space for work and leisure in South End, Port Elizabeth. They were required to pick a brand or tenant for an empty space in the existing development, that would fit into the current tenant mix, as well as a social cause to partner with their chosen brand or tenant.

Barnard's winning design submission is titled The Cochlear and is named for the hollow, spiral-shaped bone found in the inner ear responsible for auditory transaction. The young interior designer created a cochlear-shaped building with a focus on hearing and sound. "Hard surfaces and hollow arched hallways help bounce around waves of sound throughout this space in order to create an auditory experience," he explains.

Barnard has previously worked as a practice administrator at a speech therapy practice and an audiology practice - experience that clearly influenced his competition submission. For his social cause, he selected Hearing Health Foundation, a non-profit organisation that works to prevent and cure hearing loss through ground-breaking research, and to promote hearing health.

The Cochlear includes wheelchair access and hearing testing stations and proposes a partnership with celebrated audio equipment brand, Bose, which Barnard believes would "create a platform for hearing awareness and the joys of music". The Bose-branded space would include product displays, a headphone customisation bar, headphone testing stations and virtual reality stations, among other elements.

"The hardest part of the brief for me was focusing on the concept and remembering to celebrate this thread. Another challenge was meeting the brief's requirements whilst remembering to add some of my own quirk," he says.

The institution where he is studying, Design Time School of Interior Design, is no stranger to success at the PG Bison 1.618 Education Initiative. The school produced last year's runner-up entry, by Anabella Gonçalves, as well as four of the top 10 entries for 2020.

Anel Joubert, the winning lecturer, says Design Time is enormously proud of its students' performance in the competition this year, especially since their projects were completed while working entirely remotely. "Our students all really enjoyed this year's brief and found it exciting to pick a brand and design an experience for it – the perfect brief for any creative student," she enthuses. "Thank you, PG Bison. It could not have been easy to navigate the competition this year. We are grateful to be part of this prestigious competition."

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