



URBANISM — NEW YORK

Full-court press

Since mid-September, a growing number of young people – and a smaller number of less-young people – have been shooting and dribbling basketballs on the courts at Washington Market Park. Located in Manhattan’s Tribeca neighbourhood, the courts have seen a surge in activity after they were given a new paint job: a base colour of deep pine-green broken up by bold orange and yellow stripes. The unusual design is the product of a public-private partnership between New York’s city hall and the Danish menswear brand Les Deux.

The initiative is part of Les Deux Legacy, a business-within-a-business that aims to give back to communities that the brand has connections with. “We began thinking about this project about a year ago,” says Andreas von der Heide, co-founder of Les Deux. “We went to a number of municipal councils in Europe. But nobody was interested.” The occasion of Les Deux opening a sales office in New York – its first outside Europe – gave it a reason to contact the city’s government, which was immediately receptive. The outcome is a swish reminder of the role that businesses can play in enhancing quality of life in communities large and small. And if that company wins some kudos with locals too, that’s a slam dunk. — HRS lesdeux.com



ARCHITECTURE — ITALY

Q&A

Alexandra Hagen
Architect

The Venice Biennale’s international architecture exhibition wraps up at the end of November. The event brought together some of the leading names in design, including Alexandra Hagen, CEO of White Arkitekter, which presented a showcase on its Sara Cultural Centre, one of the world’s tallest timber buildings. — NM

Why did you choose to show at the Venice Biennale?

We recently completed one of the world’s tallest timber buildings and are exhibiting on the effect that such a building has on forests. It took 150 trees to make this building. We want to ask: how do we responsibly construct timber buildings, and how can we reduce the effects on our ecosystems?

Tell us about your perspective on materials?

White Arkitekter uses concrete, wood and virgin materials. But this exhibition is about how we make more use of the materials we already have. In Europe, for example, we should not be building more. We should repurpose what we already have.

How will these discussions inform the ways we build?

We need to question how to be responsible with our resources and take care of our living environment in the long term. Beauty is an important part of this. Buildings that aren’t beautiful are disposed of. We need to build beautiful things that last over time.

On DESIGN

NIC MONISSE ON...

Words of wisdom

MONOCLE is on the ground reporting from furniture fairs such as Paris’s Maison et Objet, design and architecture events like Dubai Design Week and graphic conventions such as the Alliance Graphique Internationale congress. Here are some snippets from recent conversations. — (M)

Architecture and landscape: teamwork

“Winning an architecture prize is really important for a project like this, which involves so many different people working together,” said Kate Orff, winner of this year’s Obel Prize for architecture. Her design studio, Scape, won the award after working with architects, biologists, civic officials and more to develop an underwater barrier to protect the coastline of New York. It’s a reminder that no design discipline operates in isolation.

Product: speak to sense

How a product interacts with the senses is important. Artsem Kruk, the CEO and co-founder of luxury handcare brand Plainly, has designed his products to be slightly rough to the touch. “It’s a matte glass bottle, so when you touch it there’s a textural, tactile experience,” he says.

Furniture: push the producers

“I talk with the team at the workshop to find out what is the hardest thing to do,” says Leon Farago, founder of UK-based design office Farago Studio. “Then I try to do that.” The approach encourages makers to explore new ways of making, potentially opening up new revenue streams.

Craft and manufacturing: hands-on

“Everyone gets a chance to work in the factory for a day,” says Jörg Reiff, training manager at German bathroom specialists Hansgrohe. “It helps every member of the team to get a better understanding of what their colleagues are producing.”

Graphic design: use loud lettering

Don’t underestimate the power of type, says Aurelia Rauch, creative director at Bergos. “Text has a magic to it. It doesn’t try to dictate things to you in the way that an ad with a picture of someone gazing into the future does.” Rauch oversees the branding, communications, marketing and advertising of the Zürich-based private bank. “A bold typeface gets the message across in such an immediate and resonant way.”