

Dezeen Awards 2021

Longlists revealed

dezeen

Follow:     

Search



"Play can be an act of resistance" says Design of the Year 2020 winner Virginia San Fratello



Tom Ravenscroft | 19 January 2021 | 1 comment

Following the news that US architecture studio [Rael San Fratello](#) has won the Design Museum's [Design of the Year](#) award, here's another chance to see our exclusive

interview with partner Virginia San Fratello in which she discusses the studio's [border-wall-straddling seesaw](#).

Speaking to Dezeen in a [live interview as part of Dezeen's Virtual Design Festival](#) last year, San Fratello explained the thinking behind the [Teeter-Totter Wall](#), which was named Design of the Year today.

Designed by San Fratello and [Rael San Fratello](#) co-founder Ronald Rael, the seesaws, or teeter-totters, were designed to create a physical connection between communities on either side of the wall. The installation was in place for 40 minutes before it was removed.

"For 40 minutes we were able to show the world that play can be an act of resistance," San Fratello told Dezeen. "And the wall became a literal fulcrum for US-Mexico relations."

"Children and adults were connected in meaningful ways, with the recognition that actions that take place on one side have a direct consequence on the other," she continued.



Top architecture stories



Teeter-Totter Wall was named Design of the Year today

In the interview, which covered many of Rael San Fratello’s projects, the architect described the seesaws as a “guerrilla project”, as it was installed without official permission.



Related story
Pink seesaws that straddled US-Mexico border named Design of the Year 2020

“We have worked hard to smuggle in design at the border as you can see in our teeter-totter,” she said. “Our designs are often a commentary on how people have reacted to this wall over the years.”

Most popular

Most recent



- 1 "No plans to close down" ski slope on roof of BIG power plant
- 2 Bjarke Ingels launches Nabr home design company

3 Kuanchanok Pakavaleetorn completes 55 Sathorn house in Bangkok
"The uncomfortable truth is that 2020 might just have been exactly what we needed"
 Dabbagh Architects creates collaboratively covered mosque in



"This was an opportunity to start to break down this barrier and to bring people together," she added.



The seesaws cross the border

A five-person jury, which included designer [Camille Walala](#) and Matter founder [Seetal Solanki](#), chose the pink seesaws as the overall winner of the Beazley Designs of the Year awards, which are organised by London's [Design Museum](#) every year.

The decision was announced a day before Joe Biden's inauguration as US president and [Donald Trump](#)'s departure from office.

According to the architect San Fratello, the project was designed to bring people together and has taken on new meaning following the recent invasion of the US capitol building by Trump protesters.

"It's become increasingly clear that walls don't work," San Fratello told Dezeen after the award was announced. "Walls did not keep the violent protestors out of our government buildings and they have not kept [Covid](#) out of our country. We should be building bridges, not walls."

David Chipperfield Architects set "to restore the grandeur" of Nieuwpoort's Grand Hotel



Abin Design Studio creates terracotta-brick community centre in Bansberia



Case-Real clads House in Higashi-Gotanda in galvanised steel panels

“We are living in a time when people are longing for meaningful connections and we would like to think the teeter-totter can be an example for how we come together, to create balance and equality,” she told Dezeen.

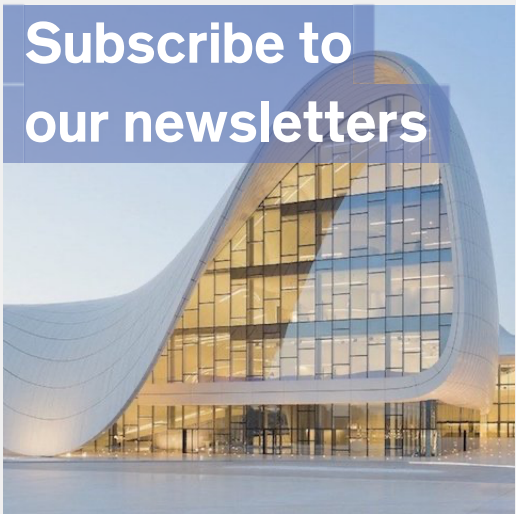
Along with the overall prize, Teeter-Totter Wall was named the winner in the transport category. Other winners included a [3D rendering of the coronavirus particle](#), which won top prize in the graphics category.

A [modular school for squatters in India](#) that was designed to be quickly dismantled and reassembled was named the architecture winner.

Read more: [Architecture](#) | [Interviews](#) | [Designs of the Year](#) | [Trump’s border wall](#) | [Rael San Fratello](#) | [Videos](#)



Subscribe



Subscribe to
our newsletters

Email

Next

Jonathan Tuckey converts mews house into Paddington Pantheon artists' gallery

Subscribe to our newsletters

Email*

Next

Share and comment



1 comment

More

Architecture
Interiors
Design
Lookbooks

Recommended movies

