CNN

A seesaw for kids on the US-Mexico border wins Design of the Year

By: Leah Dolan
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Teeter-Totter Wall," a temporary interactive installation designed by California-based architects Ronald Rael and Virigina San Fratello, has won the 2020 Beazley Design of the Year, an annual award and exhibition run by London's Design Museum.

The installation, which took place in July 2019, consisted of three bright pink teeter-totters -- or seesaws -- slotted into the gaps of the steel border wall that separates the United States and Mexico. It allowed children from El Paso, Texas, and the Anapra community in Juárez, Mexico, to play together in spite of the 20-foot wall, which stands on the most-crossed border in the world and is a continual site of political fracture.

"Teeter-Totter Wall" was designed to illustrate the intrinsic connection between the two lands, and was a collaboration with Juárez artist collective Colectivo Chopeke. "What you do on one side has an impact on the

other," Rael told CNN back in 2019, "and that's what a seesaw is."

Because of the wall's sensitive context, the project took ten years to realize. It was live for just under twenty minutes, but enough time for it to go viral. Although a temporary installation, Rael said on Instagram that the event was "filled with joy, excitement, and togetherness at the borderwall."

"The Teeter-Totter Wall encouraged new ways of human connection," said Tim Marlow, the chief executive and director of the Design Museum, in a press statement. "It remains an inventive and poignant reminder of how human beings can transcend the forces that seek to divide us."

The category winners

Five more prizes were awarded for each of the categories of nominees, in "Architecture," "Digital," "Fashion," "Graphics" and "Product."

They include a moveable school, called "ModSkool," designed by the Dehli-based Social Design Collaborative. The project responded to the forced evictions of farming communities in India with a place of learning that is easy to erect and dismantle. In addition, the Chilean feminist arts group Colectivo LASTESIS won for their protest performance "A Rapist in Your Way," which denounces sexual violence against women and the LGBTQ+ community, while luxury brand Telfar was awarded for its popular vegan leather, gender-neutral bag (priced according to the average earnings of a New York DJ for a single night's work).

Medical illustrators Alissa Eckert and Dan Higgins, who work for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), were awarded for an image seen countless times over the past year: their 3D rendering of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the illness Covid-19. Lastly, Impossible Foods won for the Impossible Burger 2.0, which aims to be a tastier, juicer patty made from plant-based proteins.

"Designs of the Year this year feels more pertinent than ever," said assistant curator Maria McLintock in October. "From designs that create a kinder and healthier world, to those calling out and critiquing systems of oppression, we hope it serves as a time capsule of a shifting world."