Grand Prix 2016-2018

**Grand Prix: permanent snapshot of international architecture**

Eleven editions. Nearly 30 years of history. Around 1700 projects entered by 1200 designers from all over the world. The Casalgrande Padana Grand Prix is a permanent fixture in the international architectural calendar, shining a light on the ways in which the company's products are used and showcasing the technical properties and attributes of the individual collections, while providing a platform upon which to demonstrate the limitless expressive potential of porcelain stoneware products, some custom-made on the request of the designers themselves.

Devised and enthusiastically supported by Casalgrande Padana, the Grand Prix is a competition designed to identify the best works around the world that combine technical attributes and creativity of application, making porcelain stoneware tiles an essential component of their design. It’s about showcasing projects were these products are a vital part of the design process and not simply an interchangeable covering. The competition focuses solely on actual buildings rather than design ideas. As a result, it serves as a tangible comparison of ideas that have been followed through, taking into account a wide range of types of architecture.

Launched in 1990, Casalgrande Padana’s Grand Prix has - over nearly 30 years - looked at a huge range of architectural projects in which ceramics occupy a key role.

The competition is judged by an international panel, who evaluate the projects entered and make completely independent judgements. Composed of industry experts, architects and architecture critics, university professors and representatives of the architecture and interior design media, the panel’s analysis and deliberations are an example of how the Grand Prix has ceased to be merely a competition - instead, it has become an opportunity to take stock of current progress in the worlds of architecture, interior design and technological innovation.

**Design culture**

Encouraging a culture of production and design has been a key part of Casalgrande Padana’s development strategy ever since the company was founded. The company works tirelessly to promote and strengthen solid collaborative relationships with the world of architecture and interior design around the world.

The aim of the competition is to create a mutually beneficial process of sharing expertise and ideas between Casalgrande Padana - a global leader in the sector - and the world of architecture. The company wishes to maintain dialogue with the authors of the works built around the world: these architects and interior designers have showcased the attributes, longevity and creative possibilities offered by the company’s products through their creations. Casalgrande Padana’s porcelain stoneware products are used in everything from large-scale, complex projects to renovation projects involving existing structures. This could mean reinventing previous architectural constructions for new purposes or producing a new facade cladding or internal or external flooring - in short, the scope of application is limitless. Whether it is a large surface in an airport, a space characterised by high footfall, such as a shopping centre, or even a hotel, swimming pool, spa or residential building, the 1700 projects that have been entered into the Grand Prix over the years show that Casalgrande Padana’s products are suitable for any architectural application.

Casalgrande Padana is the ideal partner for designers and clients all over the world. In addition to its huge range of products, Casalgrande Padana can draw on the experience of 50 years in the industry while using cutting-edge technology in the fields of durability and resistance, ensuring it can accommodate projects of any scale, type and purpose. All of this, on top of the Padana Engineering consultancy service, which provides specialist assistance throughout every project phase, makes Casalgrande Padana a leading authority in the world of design and enables us to support designers from the moment they select their materials through to project development, installation and testing.

Evidence of Casalgrande Padana’s fruitful relationship with designers and willingness to innovate when it comes to designing and using porcelain stoneware products is provided by *Casalgrande Ceramic Cloud* and *The Crown*. Located near to the Casalgrande production facility in the Emilian countryside, the landmarks are designed by Japanese master Kengo Kuma (his first work in Italy) and Daniel Libeskind respectively. Libeskind even designed the 3D texture of the metal-effect porcelain stoneware tiles used for his monolithic sculpture.

**Temples of design culture**

The quality of the works entered into the various editions of the Grand Prix has always been reflected by the prestige of the locations chosen for its award ceremonies, which crown winners in the four main categories:

- Shopping and control centres (large surfaces)

- Public, service and industrial construction, Other

- Residential building

- Facade cladding and outside flooring, including Swimming Pools

In the past, ceremonies have taken place in locations of great cultural and architectural significance, including: The Palazzo dell’Arte at the Triennale di Milano, by Giovanni Muzio, the Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista in Venice, the Sala dei Cinquecento at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Cà Granda, by Filarete, at the University of Milan, Citylife in Milan and the stunning complex by Tolentini at IUAV University in Venice. Each ceremony is an opportunity for designers and industry professionals to get together, while the events also feature keynote speeches from illustrious voices in the world of architecture. Recent speakers include Kengo Kuma and Daniel Libeskind, Francesco Dal Co and TAM Associati.

**International Architecture Exhibition panel reveals winners**

The composition of the panel has varied over time, though the level of expertise necessary to judge a competition like Grand Prix has remained unaltered - something shown by the in-depth analysis completed for each project. In the most recent edition of the competition, which examines works completed between 2016 and 2019, the panel was chaired by Casalgrande Padana president **Franco Manfredini** and composed of **Federico Bucci**, architect, journalist, architecture historian, member of faculty of the Milan Polytechnic, and Prorector of the Mantua Campus of the Milan Polytechnic; **Orazio Campo,** architect and teaching fellow in the Faculty of Architecture at the La Sapienza and Roma III universities and a member of the Rome Order of Architects; **Tobias Lutz,** the founder and CEO of the Architonic architecture and design platform in Zurich; **Mia Pizzi,** journalist at Abitare magazine; **Sebastian Redecke**, an architect and the editor of Bauwelt magazine in Berlin; **Matteo Vercelloni**, an architect, journalist and architecture critic and an editorial consultant with INTERNI magazine.

The jury has chosen the names of the finalists of the 11th edition after evaluating over 130 applications and selecting the projects that have best expressed the theme of ceramics as the star of the architectural project from both a formal and functional point of view.

This year’s awards ceremony will take place in Rome on **24 May.** The ceremony will be held in the Acquario Romano, designed by Ettore Bernich and constructed between 1885 and 1887. Built in the classic style, the building is a large, circular space with an entrance hall (pronao) and aedicula. To coincide with the restoration of **Casa Baldi** (1959-61, see next article for more) and its launch as Casalgrande Padana’s new creative centre in Rome, **architecture professor Paolo Portoghese** - who designed the original building and oversaw the recent transformation - will give a keynote speech which will be open to the public.

Casalgrande Padana’s Creative Centres are open to industry professionals and go beyond the traditional idea of a showroom. They are more like a crossroad between ceramics and projects, combining the exhibition aspect with communication, technical information, and a series of initiatives in the field of architecture, design, and production.This edition of the Grand Prix has once again demonstrated ceramics’ versatility and ability to meet the needs of contemporary architecture, even in different settings, and how this material can add value by emphasising the material and the extraordinary role of the entire composition.

That’s why Casalgrande Padana has always been a major partner of designers and architects, with whom the company builds strong relationships based on the choice of the best material for every project or the development of bespoke collections for specific settings. An essential role in disseminating the culture of ceramics and leading it into the future with new, interesting projects, while promoting international design and Italian know-how.