



Gaia, the largest wooden building in Asia, uses energy-efficient systems and renewable technologies, making it one of NTU's greenest buildings. PHOTO: NTU



A garden at Changi Airport Terminal 2 equipped with a digital "sky" ceiling emulating real-time weather conditions outside the terminal. The terminal also houses more than 20,000 plants. ST FILE PHOTO

NTU's Gaia, Changi's T2 among top winners in Unesco design awards

Gaia wins top prize under campus section, while T2 wins special prize for its interior

Esther Loi

The Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Gaia, the largest wooden building in Asia, bagged the top Unesco prize for architecture and design under the world's most beautiful campuses category on Dec 2.

Changi Airport Terminal 2 also won the special prize for its interior at the series of competitions known as Prix Versailles World Architecture and Design Award 2024, under the world's most beautiful airports category.

This award is one of the top three world titles – namely the top Prix Versailles prize and separate special prizes for interior and exterior – that finalists in each category competed for.

The Prix Versailles is an international series of architectural awards that celebrate contemporary projects worldwide by recognising innovation, creativity, reflections of local heritage, sustainability and design.

The other winners for the world's most beautiful campuses include the University of Edinburgh's Edinburgh Futures Insti-

tute in Scotland, United Kingdom, which clinched the special prize for its interior, and Paris-Saclay University's Henri Moissan Centre in Orsay, France, which won the special prize for its exterior.

The winners of the world selection prizes, which give them recognition by Unesco, include Wenzhou-Kean University's Student Learning and Activity Centre in China; and Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg Centre in Washington, and New York University's John A. Paulson Centre in New York City, in the US.

Constructed using mass-engineered timber sourced from sustainably managed forests, NTU's Gaia is designed to be environmentally friendly and produces 2,500 fewer tonnes of carbon

dioxide – the equivalent of over 7,000 round-trip flights between Singapore and Hong Kong – annually compared with typical concrete buildings.

Completed in 2022, Gaia uses energy-efficient systems and renewable technologies, making it one of NTU's greenest buildings.

NTU senior vice-president for administration Tan Aik Na accepted the award at a ceremony held at the Unesco headquarters in Paris on Dec 2. She said: "This recognition underscores the university's dedication to pioneering sustainable building solutions, creating an inspiring and environmentally responsible campus."

Separately, Changi Airport Terminal 2 received the special prize for its interior after undergoing a

major 3½-year facelift from May 2020, which gave it more than 21,000 sq m of additional floor space. The terminal reopened fully in November 2023.

It houses a four-storey-tall multimedia waterfall at the heart of its departure hall as well as a garden equipped with a digital "sky" ceiling emulating real-time weather conditions outside the terminal, and more than 20,000 plants.

Ms Ong Sim Lian, group senior vice-president for design management at Changi Airport Group, said the group is deeply honoured to be awarded the special prize.

"We would like to thank our passengers and partners for inspiring us to create the best travel experiences for all we serve at Changi Airport," she added.

Additionally, Pan Pacific Orchard also won a world selection prize under the world's most beautiful hotels category, earning the title of one of the best 16 recent hotel openings around the world.

Mr Choe Peng Sum, chief executive of Pan Pacific Hotels Group, said the group is honoured to be awarded the prize, adding: "Our biophilic design approach is centred around creating thoughtful, impactful spaces that integrate nature with the built environment, advocating sustainability and well-being."

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