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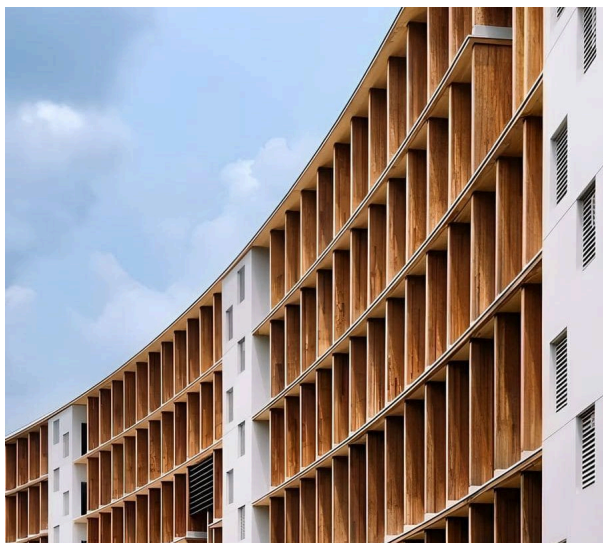
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## It's Official: Asia's Timber Building of the Future Wins UNESCO Grand Prize

Singapore's Gaia has emerged as an incubator for mass timber construction across Asia.



JASON ROSS  
WED 04 DEC 24



The Gaia building at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore has been dubbed Asia's timber building of the future. (Photo Credit: Nanyang Technological University)

Asia's largest wooden building, Gaia, is home to the world's most beautiful campus building. Housing the Nanyang Technological University's business school, one of Singapore's greenest buildings, it picked up the Prix Versailles 2024, a UNESCO award honouring the best in campus architecture and design—in what is a “call to action” for more universities and institutions to build with wood.

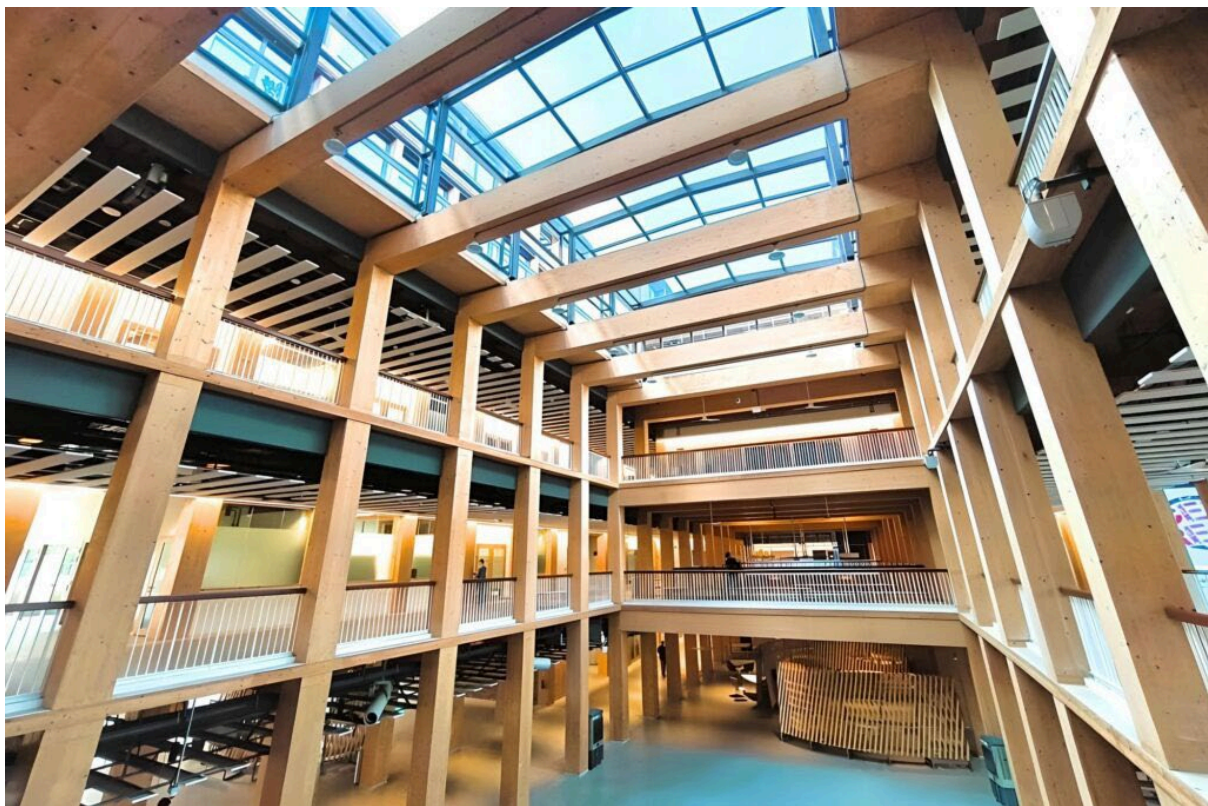
*Considered an incubator for mass timber construction in tropical climates*, the building—already crowned with ten international design awards—clinched the prize above five other

world-class university buildings in the US, UK, France, and China—each awarded a laureate by UNESCO’s global panel of judges in architecture, design, and the arts.

On hand to accept the prize, Ms Tan Aik Na, Nanyang Technological University’s Vice President of Administration, said the UNESCO prize “underscores NTU’s dedication to pioneering sustainable building materials, creating an inspiring and environmentally responsible campus.”

“By enhancing the living and learning experience for our community, Gaia serves as both a cornerstone of our campus and a model for sustainable development, specifically for the tropical region.”

Named after the Greek goddess of the Earth, Gaia was constructed during the peak of the Pandemic, using PEFC and FSC-sourced cross-laminated timber and glulam timber from European (Stora Enso) and North American (Mercer Mass Timber) suppliers.



Inside Gaia, Nanyang Technological University’s timber building of the future. (Photo Credit: NTU University)

[\*Speaking to Built Offsite in 2022\*](#), Nick Milestone, Vice President of Building and Construction for Mercer Mass Timber, said the six-storey building features a ‘services highway’ “to allow shallower beam depths and utilises a combination of CLT for slabs and Glulam for beams and columns using hidden proprietary connections; some 13,500 cubic metres of mass timber elements.”

### **Gaia is a call to arms for institutions to embrace timber construction worldwide**

Compared to a conventional steel-and-concrete building, a timber-and-steel building produces 2,500 fewer tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per year—equivalent to 7,000 roundtrip flights from Singapore to Hong Kong. Mass timber is a key plank in the university’s commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2035 under its sustainability manifesto.

“We hope Gaia continues to inspire the NTU community and beyond to embrace sustainability practices in every aspect of our lives,” Ms Tan said. “This award is not only a recognition of NTU’s pioneering role in not just championing but adopting sustainable building practices; it is also a call to action for universities and institutions to prioritise sustainability in their building projects.”

UNESCO presents the Prix Versailles in collaboration with the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the International Union of Design (IUD). It is an international series of architectural awards celebrating projects worldwide that recognise design, innovation, and sustainability excellence.

To date, Gaia has secured the Austrian Green Planet Building (AGPB) Technology Award—which was presented on campus by the Austrian Ambassador to Singapore, Mr Peter Guschelbauer, last week—the Architizer A+ Awards (Sustainable Institutional Building—Jury Winner) and the Architecture MasterPrize Architectural Design Awards in the Institutional Architecture category (Best of the Best).