

Paris, 30 September 2024

Press release

Prix Versailles 2024: The World's Most Beautiful Sports Venues

The Prix Versailles is unveiling the World's Most Beautiful Sports Venues List for 2024: six recently opened or renovated structures that simultaneously serve creativity, the reflection of local heritage and ecological efficiency, and that leave extraordinary imprints on their environments.

They will all be competing for three 2024 World Titles – Prix Versailles, Interior and Exterior – whose laureates will be announced at UNESCO Headquarters on 2 December 2024.

Amongst the many functions associated with sport, endeavouring to build stadiums and arenas that are welcoming, festive and attractive is key, as reiterated by Jérôme Gouadain, Secretary General of the Prix Versailles:

“Whether serving the local community or hosting major international events, sports facilities contribute to regional and national identities. They capture the attention of their audiences, who feel close to them, whether they are near or far. As a result, celebrating the World's Most Beautiful Sports Venues means encouraging their social, cultural and ecological responsibility.”



PRIX VERSAILLES

WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL SPORTS VENUES LIST 2024

təməsewtx^w

New Westminster, Canada

Workers' Stadium

Beijing, China

Hybrid Stadium

Hangzhou, China

Olympic Aquatic Centre

Saint-Denis, France

CityPark

St. Louis, United States

Gillette Stadium

Foxborough, United States

*The Laureates are listed in the alphabetical order of the countries they represent
(based on their two-letter ISO 3166 country codes).*



PRIX VERSAILLES

PRESENTATION OF THE LAUREATES

təməsewtx^w

New Westminster, Canada

The mission of təməsəwtx^w aquatic centre in British Columbia is to be the heart and soul of its community. Located in the outskirts of a residential neighbourhood to the north of the Fraser River, this facility relies on the topography of its terrain, an old ravine in need of rehabilitation.

At first glance, the structure and its unifying roof appear to be woven horizontally into the landscape. But the interior reveals vast, tall spaces: the swimming areas are monumental pools where concrete, wood and light cohabit in harmony. Plentiful public areas underscore the facility's community purpose, as well as its goal of offering visitors an experience on a human scale.

This intelligent concept from hcma delivers a sporting infrastructure that is connected to the site's natural and cultural environments.

For the record, təməsəwtx^w means "sea otter house" in Halkomelem, the language of the First Nations people in whose territory New Westminster is located.



© Nic Lehoux



© Nic Lehoux



© Nic Lehoux

Workers' Stadium

Beijing, China



© Beijing Institute of Architectural Design



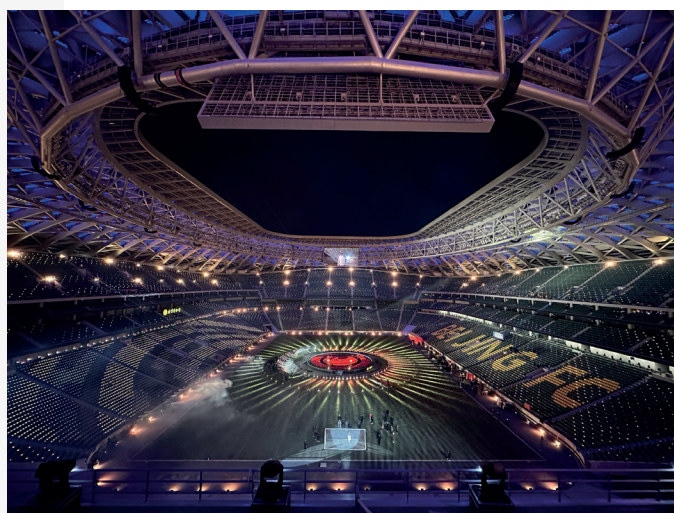
© Beijing Institute of Architectural Design

Built in 1959, the Workers' Stadium is a monument whose image and structure form a heritage that is near and dear to the population's hearts. More than just restoring its original external look, in accordance with industry standards, this project looked to the future for its upgrades.

The Beijing Institute of Architectural Design (BIAD) came up with a subjective concept of "digital disclosure", putting technology to work for the experience and comfort of 68,000 spectators. One example of this is the parametrically designed canopy, which provides functions such as shading, lighting, water drainage, snow melting, photovoltaic power generation and sound absorption.

An underground area was excavated for the creation of modern shopping spaces, and the irrigation of lawns and other greenery is now connected to the urban drainage system.

This world-class renovation is an invitation to celebrate, under the amazing lights and animations that now set the building aglow on match nights.



© Beijing Institute of Architectural Design

Hybrid Stadium

Hangzhou, China

Hybrid Stadium, also known as the Gongshu canal sports park gymnasium, was designed with versatility in mind, so it could host multiple disciplines of the Asian Games and the Asian Para Games, which mainly took place in Hangzhou in autumn 2023.

The facility is set apart from a field hockey pitch, known as the Hangzhou Umbrella, which was also conceived by the design studio Archi-Tectonics. The two venues are there, like two pebbles, sitting not in a river but in a 195,000 m² park.

Following one Chinese scholar, “Philosophers say the smooth expanse between nodes represents virtue, a long distance between faults, and the hollow interior bespeaks modesty and humility”. Here, that “long distance” has been transformed into charming, tree-filled gardens.

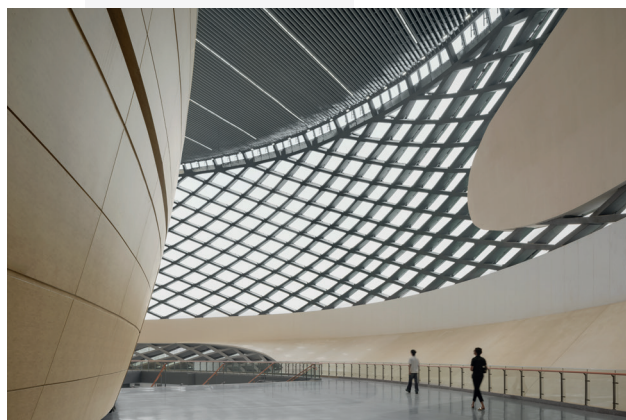
The oval shape of the stadium was inspired by the cong, an ancient jade artefact from the Liangzhu culture. And its walls, made of a grid of steel and glass, are reminiscent of fish scales.

Like an organic entity, the stadium self-regulates its ventilation based on information received from sensors, allowing for the natural circulation of air with minimal artificial cooling.

At the heart of a sprawling urban park – the lyrical green lung of a new activities centre in Hangzhou – the stadium turns into a magical lantern when night falls and promises a revitalised cultural future for the city.



© Archi-Tectonics



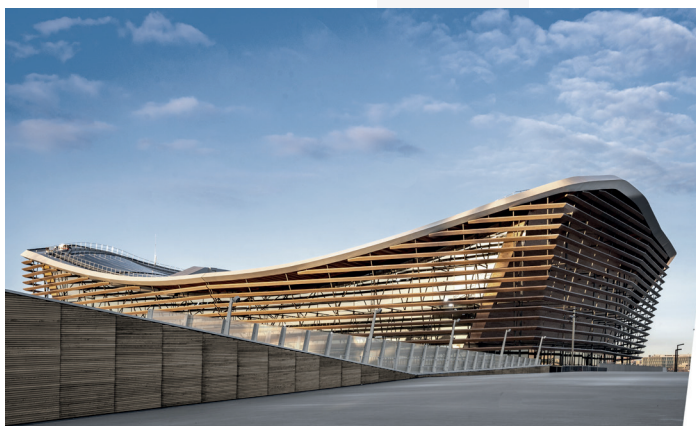
© Archi-Tectonics



© Archi-Tectonics

Olympic Aquatic Centre

Saint-Denis, France



© Métropole du Grand Paris

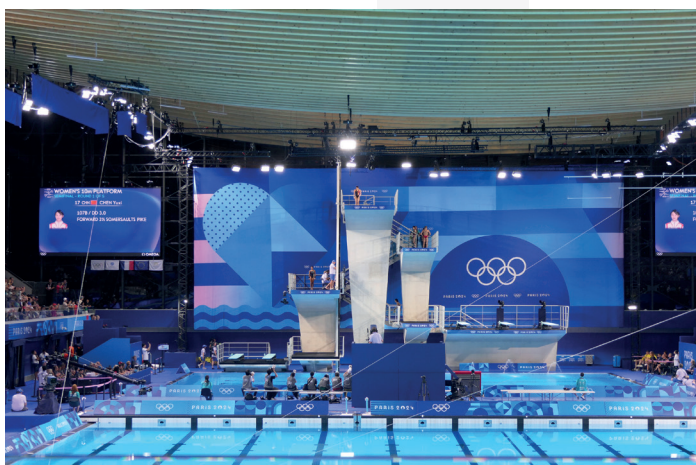
Across the road from the Stade de France, a wooden sculpture has emerged from the landscape of the Metropolis of Greater Paris. The Olympic Aquatics Centre, designed by VenhoevenCS and Ateliers 2/3/4, is a new architectural signal and the only major sports facility to be built for the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics.

Its spacious yet compact architecture was inspired by nature, with the aim of making it both coherent and receptive.

This facility is part of a new urban park. In addition to featuring 100 or so newly planted trees, its wooden structure was built to be low carbon, thanks in particular to the use of bio-sourced and recycled materials.

Its concave, outstretched frame is a world first that instils the venue with its magic and its identity.

Beneath that delicate ripple, light floods the entire space, so that any spectacle unfolding there becomes a most captivating event.



© Métropole du Grand Paris



© Métropole du Grand Paris

CityPark

St. Louis, United States

CityPark is the country's largest sports campus dedicated to soccer (football), located in the centre of St. Louis, Missouri. This 32-acre development in the Downtown West neighbourhood has been a catalyst for revitalisation.

Built on a vacant lot, this project connects the iconic Union Station and the Gateway Mall – a block-wide strip of greenery open to the public – to the city centre.

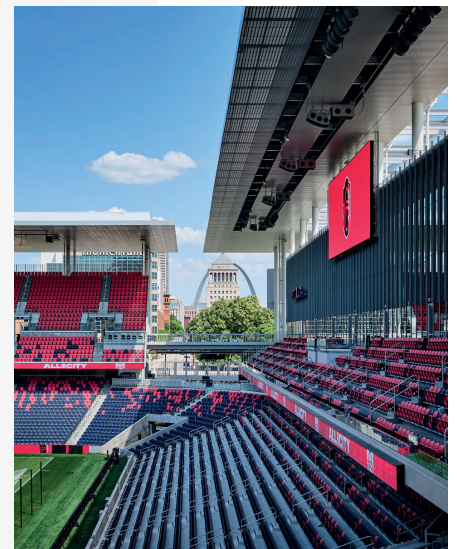
The site looks out over the city and boasts excellent connections to public transport and to pedestrian and cycling pathways.

In terms of the structure itself, the brilliant strategy adopted by the firm HOK was to excavate the land to a depth of 12 metres below street level in order to accommodate back-of-house services via an underground tunnel, to reduce the size of the stadium. The idea was also to give passers-by a glimpse of the action from the pavement outside.

Mission accomplished: more than just a stadium, this campus has become a part of the daily lives of all St. Louisans. A wonderful expression of inclusivity, indeed.



© HOK / Michael Robinson



© HOK / Michael Robinson



© HOK / Michael Robinson

Gillette Stadium

Foxborough, United States

Gillette Stadium has undergone the biggest and most dramatic improvements since it first opened in 2002.

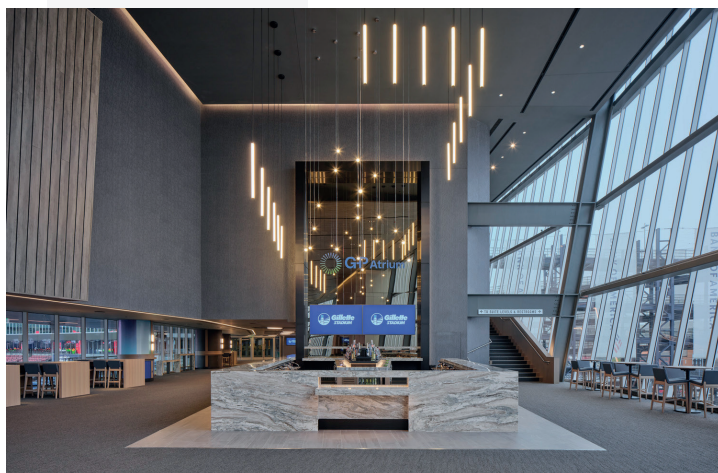
One symbol of this transformation, carried out by Populous, is a 360° observation deck at the top of the venue's iconic lighthouse, which stands 66 metres tall. That deck provides sweeping views of a completely reinvented facility for the entertainment of its supporters.

The entrance to the stadium is now a real pedestrian path, inspired by the meanderings of the New England region's salt marshes and rocky shorelines.

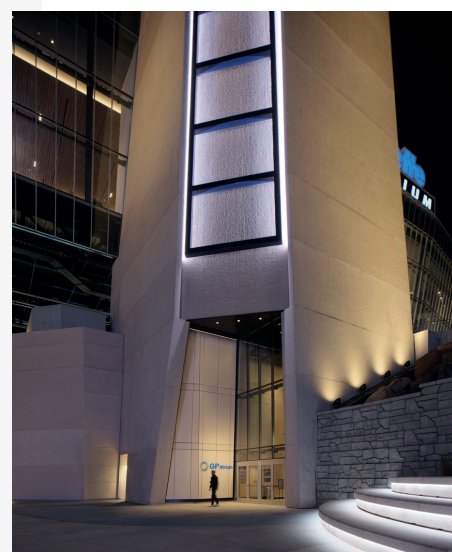
As concerns the stadium itself, this renovation keeps the venue at the cutting edge of technology and maximises the fan experience for current and future generations. And a monumental staircase leads to extremely welcoming spaces.

Located behind a giant (2,100 m²) video board, the new club atrium is revolutionising stadium hospitality.

The use of silvery tones – a New England Patriots' signature colour – joins the town's lighthouse in a brilliant metamorphosis.



© Populous



© Populous



© Populous



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