

Game of Steel

Steel Awards 2023 to celebrate the power of steel past, present and future

Nominations for this year's Southern African Institute of Steel Construction (SAISC) Awards have featured in everything from local community newspapers to the Guinness Book of Records, and have taken shape everywhere from Cape Town to West Africa.

The judging of almost 40 diverse nominated projects showcasing pioneering innovation and courageous design is complete, and planning for this year's flagship event in Johannesburg on 19th October is rapidly gathering momentum.

"This iconic annual steel industry event, which enables the Institute to promote the capabilities of steel - an infinitely diverse, resilient material of construction - provides an important

platform for honouring the hard work of individuals and companies across the entire value chain," says SAISC CEO Amanuel Gebremeskel.

Glamour and fun meet technology

Denise Sherman, SAISC Marketing and Management Consultant, says that although the red carpet event - commonly referred to as the 'Oscars of the steel industry' - will add some glamour, it is the ongoing hard work and innovation invested in the nominated and award-winning projects which will be the real drawcard.

Sherman says that the SAISC is expecting to host more than 750 industry attendees, at what promises to be a very colourful 'dress up' event, with its mediaeval Game of Thrones theme.

She hints that many popular aspects of former events have been retained - such as plenty of time for networking in the evening's programme - however a few changes can be expected. These include amusing elements such as prizes for the three best-dressed individuals; and one for the best-dressed table.

This year's Game of Thrones theme will not only add an entertaining aspect, taken as it is from the hit HBO series - but also highlights the importance of steel throughout the ages.

"Over thousands of years, few things have had as significant an impact on the development of the world as steel, which has effectively defined the way that people built structures, cultivated food, fought wars and travelled - to name but a few socio-political elements of life through

Amanuel Gebremeskel,
SAISC CEO



the ages, hallmarked by steel,” Sherman observes.

She adds that the entire process of nomination and presentation of projects has also been completely digitised this year, featuring an online template provided to assist with submissions to the SAISC’s recently revamped website. This has significantly improved the quality of entries this year.

“Both the nominators and project teams have embraced technology to showcase their projects. The quality of the project entry information is what makes the Steel Awards work so well, and is integral to their success,” she says.

Pan-African punch

“On a more serious note, the Game of Thrones portrays turbulent geo-politics and intense competition – very similar to what the world is experiencing currently, and which is impacting the steel industry not only internationally, but also across the African continent,” Gebremeskel comments.

This year, he notes, the Steel Awards have a distinctly Pan-African flavour, with the addition of a new Pan-Africa

Trailblazer category: “We have a number of entries from all over the African continent. This year, the Awards demonstrate very tangibly how South Africa’s products are being used all over the continent, and feature projects which range from mining to the construction of a church,” he says.

The Pan-African nature of the entries also reflects Gebremeskel’s call for more regional representation in entries in his keynote address at Steel Awards 2022.

“The quality of the projects featured through these awards is particularly important. We are highlighting that the South African steel construction sector can successfully execute quality, world-class projects throughout Africa,” he adds. Furthermore, as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement gains momentum, and supply chains across Africa combine to drive growth, enabling companies to supply, process, fabricate and construct steel structures in many industries, Gebremeskel advises that it is important that an event such as the Steel Awards has evolved into a truly continental one.

A celebration of diverse collaboration

He also says that the number of nominations has increased this year, as have the number of entries from outside South Africa – as well as the number of projects featuring project interviews with steel supply chain professionals, such as engineers and architects.

“We always want to hear from the people who are engaging with our industry, for example specifying and designing in steel. This year, a number of architects, engineers, contractors and even project owners have participated in project interviews and entries. This also signifies the importance they ascribe to the Steel Awards, investing their time and efforts to ensure high standard entries,” he enthuses.

Further to this, more women in the steel supply chain have also submitted projects, as have more small companies and emerging steel entrepreneurs. “Overall, the diversity of participants and projects has increased - which bodes well for overall transformation within the steel sector,” Gebremeskel notes.

“There is significantly more collaboration. Previously, the designer presented the fabricator with drawings, and they had to figure out how to put it together. Now, both engineers and contractors are involved right from the get-go. The sequence of the work has essentially changed. This is a major leap forward in an industry such as ours,” he remarks.

According to Gebremeskel, architectural, institutional and educational applications are notable in this year’s Steel Awards entries – including two projects executed for well-known South African universities.

“I believe that in both cases, the universities and project designers wanted these buildings to showcase that they were world-class. Steel is therefore the physical manifestation of this status, and was used symbolically.

We are therefore very much looking forward to seeing projects such as these and many others celebrated at a vibrant, memorable Steel Awards 2023! One which is an effective showcase of the steel industry’s exciting people, history, culture, diversity, capabilities, innovation and Pan-African trajectory,” Gebremeskel concludes.



*Denise Sherman,
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