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Design with a Conscience: Columbia Team Wins Curry Stone Design Prize

By [Kelsey Keith](#)

Medillin, Colombia, was once known as the drug capital of the world. But thanks to a massive urban and architectural renewal project helmed by Sergio Farjado and Alejandro Echeverri, Medillin's former mayor and director of urban projects, respectively, the city is on a better path. Case in point: today's announcement at the [2009 Idea Festival](#) [1] that Colombia's [Transformative Public Works](#) [2] is this year's recipient of the [Curry Stone Design Prize](#) [3] awarded by [Architecture for Humanity](#) [4].



The Curry Stone Design Prize was founded with the belief that "designers can be an instrumental force for improving people's lives and the state of the world." The challenge of selecting one

winner from this year's finalists--including an open-source response program to global warming and a hand-built community in Bangladesh--went to Michael Bierut, design guru and Pentagram [5] partner; prize founder Clifford Curry; architect Lindy Roy [6]; and representatives from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development [7] and Interactive Africa [8].

Echeverri and Fajardo directed a team of architects and technicians to harness their ingenuity and craft for social good. Landmark construction includes the Orquideorama, a 42,200-square-foot structure whose wood-framed hexagonal roof shelters the Botanical Garden's orchid collection. There's also the newly iconic Parque Biblioteca España, perched in the hills of Santo Domingo and reminiscent of three massive etched boulders. These grand, optimistic projects have revitalized the downtown landscape, once full of barrios notorious for drug violence.

But their ambition goes beyond eye candy. An elevated gondola tramway connecting poorer, isolated neighborhoods on the city's outskirts to the city center has modernized Medellín's transportation system. More importantly, it has created new opportunities for education and employment by making the city more accessible to the people who need its resources most. As Fajardo puts it, these building projects have managed to "change the skin of the city."





Update via [Bustler](#). [9]

Links:

- [1] <http://www.ideafestival.com/>
- [2] http://currystonedesignprize.com/recipients/2009/transformative_public_works
- [3] <http://currystonedesignprize.com/>
- [4] <http://www.architectureforhumanity.org/>
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