

## Taiwanese Architect Hsieh Ying-Chun Wins Curry Stone Design Prize October 4, 2011



Hsieh Ying-Chun, a Taiwanese architect who helps communities rebuild after natural disasters, has won the 2011 Curry Stone Design Prize. The \$100,000 annual award, which aims to champion designers as a force of social change, is bestowed by the Curry Stone Foundation, an Oregon-based charitable group.

Two additional firms will receive \$10,000 awards – Paris-based Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, a collective that aims to transform urban spaces through citizen engagement, and London-based FrontlineSMS, which helps organizations manage text-message communication in the developing world.

Hsieh's interest in disaster-relief architecture began in 1999, when a 7.3-magnitude earthquake rocked central Taiwan, destroying more than 50,000 buildings. Looking to help the Thao aboriginal group, he began designing rural homes that largely could be built by area residents using lightweight framing and local materials. Since then, he has helped construct more than 3,000 homes in Taiwan and Mainland China, while responding to disasters such as the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and 2009's Typhoon Morakot, which triggered flooding and mudslides in Taiwan. Most recently, Hsieh has been working on designs intended for Haiti and India.

"We've developed a simple construction system that includes a lightweight steel frame, on-site assembly, and the production of a wide range of materials for the walls and skin of the building," Hsieh told RECORD through a translator. Collaborative, community-based construction is key to his creations, he said, noting that construction methods must be simple enough for untrained laborers. He added that the construction process "can help address the common issue of unemployment in disaster areas," in addition to strengthening relationships among villagers and reinforcing a sense of community.

Chee Pearlman, prize curator, said jurors were impressed with Hsieh's focus on low-cost, low-tech dwellings that could be built by victims of natural disasters. Rather than rely on outsiders, they can "be part of the solution," she said.

The Curry Stone Design prize was established in 2008. This year's four-member jury consisted of Alejandro Echeverri, former director of urban projects for Medellín, Colombia; Mohsen Mostafavi, dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD); Cynthia Smith, curator of socially responsible design at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum; and Clifford Curry, the architect who co-founded the Curry Stone Foundation with his wife, Delight Stone, an archaeologist. Cameron Sinclair, co-founder of Architecture for Humanity, serves as senior advisor for the prize.

This year's winners will be honored, and will present their work, on November 7 at an evening ceremony hosted by the Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard GSD. Visit the Curry Stone Design Prize website for more information.