

# Atrium architect harvests award for use of wood

## Materials included reclaimed lumber, pine-beetle kill, blowdown

BY DARRON KLOSTER, TIMES COLONIST MARCH 17, 2011

Franc D'Ambrosio's stunning use of wood inside the Atrium building has earned the Victoria architect a major award from the industry.

D'Ambrosio architecture + urbanism was singled out for the Interior Beauty honour at the B.C. Wood Design Awards this week, one of 12 winners whittled from 82 nominations.

D'Ambrosio used several kinds of wood -including reclaimed lumber, Island hemlock and cedar, beetle-kill from the Interior and local blowdown -to create the atrium inside the new building on Blanshard Street downtown, which is the new headquarters for B.C. Ferries, Land Titles and a string a local businesses and restaurants on the ground floor.

The curved walls use wood and glass to give office workers interior views of an atrium with trees, seating and open public space.

Wood beams support a glass ceiling that pours in natural light and two round seating sculptures, crafted by local artist Bill Porteous, were milled by a Metchosin company using maple and Gary Oak logs salvaged from wind storms.

"We're very proud of the award ... we've won wood council awards before, but one for beauty is very special," D'Ambrosio said in an interview Wednesday. "It's essentially a public square with a roof. Urban buildings should contribute to the public domain, and as we get more dense in our cities we have to offer more spaces that are uplifting."

D'Ambrosio credits the Jawl family, owners of the building, for going "above and beyond" in both the quality and the content of the Atrium. Besides the office tenants, all of the businesses on the ground floor are local companies who are either new or taking their next step in growth.

Judges lauded the Atrium's impressive central arrival hall and noted the Jawls' long history with dimensional lumber, owning one of the first lumber companies on Vancouver Island.

"This history inspired the expression of small dimension lumber in this important space," judges said in their notes.

"The leap of scale from the repetition of small dimension slats over the curving expanse of the atrium's sides generates strong visual impact. The wood slats, as well as the cedar soffits, also form an integral part of the atrium's acoustic strategy. As a semi-public urban room, the Atrium uses the warmth of wood to welcome office workers and invite the public into the space.

Butchart Gardens, meanwhile, also snared one of the 12 B.C. Wood Design Awards for its children's pavilion building that houses its grand, handcarved carousel.





Architect Franc D'Ambrosio says it is essential that "urban buildings contribute to the public domain.

**Photograph by:** Debra Brash, Times Colonist, Times Colonist

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Darryl Condon of Hughes Condon Marler Architects picked up the Commercial Wood Design Award for the 7,500square-foot domed pavilion, which will house the carousel behind a fullfronted glass facade and includes a coffee bar and an event room.

The dome was constructed with wood harvested from areas hit by the mountain pine beetle, and has a green roof planted with native mosses. A circular skylight at the centre allows natural light into the pavilion and the integrated design follows the highest environmental-design criteria.

The B.C. Wood Design Awards is an industry led initiative of the Canadian Wood Council supporting innovation in the use of wood and wood products.

A full list of the winners can be found at [wood-works.org](http://wood-works.org)

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