

Shift International Architecture Competition

1.0 The Competition Process

1.1 Timeline and Key Facts

January 2025 – Competition launch: two stage competition

- Shift launched the international architecture competition to design the first Shift Landmark in the Netherlands
- The competition challenged architects, artists, engineers, ecologists, and experience designers to create a new type of landmark focused on sustainability, systems change, and behaviour change.
- The total prize fund amounted to €250,000.

January – April 2025 – International open call for stage one

- Architects and design professionals from more than 50 countries downloaded the competition brief.
- More than 80 multidisciplinary teams submitted proposals from around the world with their vision.
The site was not known yet at that time
- The competition attracted both emerging practices and internationally renowned firms.

April 2025 – Selection of finalists

- Following the first stage, three teams were selected (next to 2 preselected teams by Shift) to advance to the final phase:
 - Ecosistema Urbano (Spain) - preselected

- Heatherwick Studio (United Kingdom) - preselected
- Office for Political Innovation (Spain)
- MVRDV (Netherlands)
- Mecanoo (Netherlands)
- Each finalist received €40,000 to further develop their proposals.

November 2025 – February 2026 – Design development

- Rotterdam and the new neighbourhood Waterkant was selected as the location and the teams received detailed information about the site and the neighbourhood.
- During Stage Two, the teams further developed their concepts in dialogue with Shift, technical experts, and local stakeholders.
- The multidisciplinary teams included multidisciplinary teams of experts such as architects, engineers, artists, ecologists, experience designers, and sustainability experts.
- Teams visited Rotterdam South and engaged with local organizations and initiatives to better understand the area's social, economic, and cultural context.

3 March 2026 – Jury and Public presentation in Rotterdam

- An international jury evaluated the proposals based on their (financial) feasibility, bold design, sustainability vision, alignment with the Shift program's goal of driving awareness into action, and their integration within social, urban, and natural context.
- The five finalists presented their designs to the jury and afterwards, publicly at LantarenVenster in Rotterdam.
- The event brought together sustainability pioneers, local changemakers, entrepreneurs, community organizations, and stakeholders from Rotterdam South.
- For the first time, the designs were shared with a wider audience and the press

Spring 2026 – Jury verification

- Following the jury decision, the highest-ranked proposal and the runner up entered a detailed verification process run by Shift to test its technical, financial, and operational feasibility.
- This verification process was finalised at the end of April 2026 and a final verification step was planned with the highest ranked proposal.

June 2026 – Completion of verification phase

- The verification process was completed, confirming the feasibility of the selected design as a and buildable project that is able to achieve its green ambitions..

June - July 2026 – Pre-design phase

- The winning team subsequently entered a pre-design phase, focused on further developing the design into a realistic and buildable project.

Key dates	• January 15, 2025: Launch of the Competition • March 5, 2025: Submission deadline stage one • May 6, 2025: Announcement Shortlist Finalists stage one • November 2025 : Selected Teams work further on designs • March 3, 2026: Reveal of 5 Finalist Designs • July 21, 2026: Reveal of the Winning Design
Jury members	• Aric Chen, Director, Zaha Hadid Foundation • Astrid Leyssens, Founder, We Are Impact Collective • Ben van Berkel, Founder, UNS • Carice van Houten, Activist, Actress • Clemens Brenninkmeijer, Chair Family Community, COFRA Holding • Géke Roelink, Director, NEMO Science Museum • Dr. Lewis Akenji, Executive Director, Hot or Cool Institute • Lodewijk Hoekstra, Ambassador and Presenter • Matthias Schuler, Founder, TRANSSOLAR • Mireia Luzárraga, Co-Founder, TAKK • Nicole Maarsen, Real Estate Investor and Trusted Advisor

Prize Money	€250,000 in total; five shortlisted firms received €40,000 each, with a winning concept receiving an additional €50,000
Competition Advisor	<u>DVDL</u> , a New York-based agency of cultural planners working on visitor experience, placemaking, cultural strategy in North America, Europe and the Middle East
Competition Host	Shift
5 Finalist Designs	https://shift.world/landmark

2.0 Bios of Key People behind the Competition

2.1 Organizers

Don Ritzen, Founder & CEO of Shift



Don is driven by conviction that behavioral change is the single biggest untapped lever for solving climate change. That belief is what led him to found Shift, with a mission to orchestrate the greatest comeback in our history. He's not doing this alone – thousands of individuals, impact investors, family offices, and tech pioneers share this commitment. With their help, he's the main driving force behind the international architecture competition to create the Shift Landmark

Before starting Shift, Don was the co-founder of Amsterdam-based Rockstart, a venture capital firm, which has offices in Bogota, Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Since its inception in 2010, Rockstart has invested in 350+ early-stage startups to date, many of them impact-oriented companies such as Peerby,

Hubs and Finch Buildings, the Dutch market leader in modular timber buildings. The companies in the Rockstart portfolio are now worth €1.7 billion combined. Similarly to the mission of Shift, he helped in paving the way for startups in the Netherlands and beyond, at a time when rarely any venture capital was available.

He also sat on the investment committee for Rockstart's Web&Mobile, Artificial Intelligence, Smart Energy, Digital Health and Rockstart Colombia programmes, and set up Rockstart's corporate innovation practice.

David van der Leer, Principal of DVDL



David van der Leer, Principal of DVDL, is a consultant, educator, moderator, researcher, strategist, and writer. David's passion is reinventing the institutions of yesterday—and dreaming up the most inspirational institutions of tomorrow—through excellent architecture and interdisciplinary programs.

David founded DVDL in 2018 after having worked and consulted with institutions, government agencies, corporations, and individuals for 15 years.

He has extensive experience in bringing together interdisciplinary teams to create successful design projects. David has taught a course called (Re)Programming Museums at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation and now teaches a course called Institutions & Impact: Mental Health – Could hybrid institutions have more impact? at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.

David has created, chaired, and led nearly 30 design competitions, and he has commissioned numerous design and art projects. He enjoys rethinking conventional design competition and commissioning processes, and actively promotes new practices in events like the Design Competition Conference he developed and co-chaired at Harvard University in 2015.

Born and raised in The Netherlands, David is a graduate of Erasmus University Rotterdam, and of the High Impact Leadership program at Columbia University's Business School.

2.2 Jury

Aric Chen Director of the Zaha Foundation



Aric Chen is a curator, writer and Director of the Zaha Hadid Foundation, the London-based cultural foundation established by the late architect Dame Zaha Hadid. American-born, Chen previously served as General and Artistic Director of the Nieuwe Instituut; Professor and founding Director of the Curatorial Lab at the College of Design & Innovation at Tongji University in Shanghai; Curatorial Director of the Design Miami fairs in Miami Beach and Basel; Creative Director of Beijing Design Week; and Lead Curator for Design and Architecture at M+, Hong Kong, where he oversaw the formation of that new museum's design and architecture collection and program.

Astrid Leyssens Founder of We Are Impact Collective



Astrid drives system change through sustainable impact investing and strategy. With broad experience in both private equity and family office sectors, she advises companies on integrating social and environmental value into their long-term strategies. A seasoned board member and mentor, Astrid excels in guiding organizations through complex challenges while fostering innovation and societal impact.

Ben van Berkel Founder of UNS



Ben is the founder of UNS, an internationally renowned architecture and design firm based in Amsterdam with offices in Austin, Melbourne, Dubai, Frankfurt and Hongkong. With a focus on human-centered design, he has led the creation of iconic projects spanning architecture, urban planning and product design. Van Berkel's work explores the intersection of architecture, technology and sustainability.

Carice van Houten Activist, Actress



Carice van Houten gained international acclaim for her portrayal of Melisandre in the iconic TV show "Game of Thrones" and Paul Verhoeven's Black Book (2006). Beyond acting, she is a committed human rights and environmental activist, participating in climate protests and advocating for ecocide to be recognized as an international crime.

Clemens Brenninkmeijer Chair Family Community at Cofra Holding



Clemens Brenninkmeijer is the chair of Family Community at Cofra. Prior to that he was the Head of Sustainability at Redevco, one of Europe's largest independent real estate asset management companies. He is passionate about the role of real estate in creating vibrant, dynamic, liveable and sustainable cities and ensuring that projects are good for people and the planet. He also serves as Global Governing Trustee of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and sits on their Change Steering Committee.

Géke Roelink Director of NEMO Science Museum



Géke Roelink is the director of NEMO Science Museum in Amsterdam, where she leads initiatives to inspire curiosity and engagement with science and technology. With a background in cultural management, she has a passion for creating educational experiences that make complex scientific concepts accessible to a wide audience. Under her leadership, NEMO continues to innovate in its mission to foster critical thinking and learning through interactive exhibits and programs.

Dr. Lewis Akenji Executive Director of Hot or Cool Institute.



Dr. Lewis Akenji is managing director of Hot or Cool Institute, a public-interest think tank that explores the intersection between society and sustainability. His work takes a political economy lens to economic development and the environment, with implications on fair distribution of resources within ecological limits.

Lodewijk Hoekstra Founder Greenlabel institute and Presenter



Lodewijk Hoekstra is a passionate advocate for a sustainable world where people and nature exist in harmony. Over the past 20 years, he has become well-known as a TV gardener, appearing on programs like Eigen Huis en Tuin and Lodewijks Groene Geluk, and has authored books such as Green Happiness, offering tips for a greener lifestyle. As the quartermaster ambassador for Green Circles Green Healthy City, he works to make municipalities more sustainable,

and he co-founded NL Greenlabel to establish a standard for nature-inclusive development, which is now widely adopted by 220 partners in the Netherlands.

Mireia Luzárraga Principal of TAKK architecture



Mireia Luzárraga is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Core I sequence at Columbia University' GSAPP in New York. She is principal of TAKK architecture, a research-driven design office based in Barcelona and New York. Her work focuses on investigating how design can catalyze egalitarian societies through the incorporation of feminism, queer ecologies, and posthuman studies into spatial practices.

Nicole Maarsen Real Estate Investor and Trusted Advisor



Nicole Maarsen is an experienced real estate investor and trusted advisor. She is a supervisory board member of Home.Earth, an impact real estate company. Over the past 20 years she has held senior roles at ING Real Estate, Syntrus Achmea and Maarsen Groep, and is actively involved in various industry boards, including the Dutch Green Building Council and the Economic Institute for Construction.