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# MacEwen 2024 shortlist: The Paper Garden, Canada Water, London



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‘A young person will come in and proudly point out the part of the classroom they helped build’



The Paper Garden, Canada Water, London by Jan Kattein Architects.

**The Paper Garden, Canada Water, London**  
**Jan Kattein Architects for Global Generation**  
**Contract cost: £200k**  
**GIA: 225m<sup>2</sup>**

On the site of the former Daily Mail printworks in Canada Water, London, a rapidly developing area, Paper Garden offers a garden and an educational community building for Global Generation – a charity creating educational and leadership opportunities for young people, and ecology projects for schoolchildren and families.

The project is consciously low-carbon, with cordwood walls (a construction method using short lengths of timber logs, taken from Epping Forest tree pruning, bedded in lime mortar). An insulated cavity wall offers thermal performance. Oak for the corner quoins was donated by Network Rail, the floor was constructed from 200 doors reclaimed from a local demolished police station, and the actual doors and windows are rejected stock donated by Scandinavian manufacturer Nordan. Plywood construction hoardings were also re-used in the construction, with the result that the building comprises 60% reused materials and easily exceeds the LETI (Low Energy Transformation Initiative) 2030 target.

Jan Kattein Architects employed its trademark approach of community involvement by rallying 3000 volunteers to help construct the building and garden, to help meet the straitened budget of £200,000. ‘Our gardens are “gardens of a thousand hands” that are collaboratively created with the community, children, young people, businesses and construction companies, and create spaces where these different worlds can come together,’ confirmed client Alice Hardy. ‘Jan Kattein Architects designed a building and a construction process which our community could grow alongside. Often a young person will come in and proudly point out the part of the classroom they helped build.’

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The Paper Garden, Canada Water, London by Jan Kattein Architects.

< 1 of 5 >

This collaborative construction approach impressed the judges, with Je Ahn describing it as a true ‘barn raising’. Judge Alex Scott-Whitby expressed a belief that this level of success could only achieved with such success thanks to Kattein’s unique approach and experience in this sort of project: ‘Had another architect been involved it wouldn’t be such a rich project,’ he asserted.

There is a ‘generosity’ to this project and an ‘exciting’ quality, Ahn continued, which comes through in the warmth of the design of both the building and gardens; this is certainly corroborated by its clients who describe it as a ‘truly magical space’.

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