

FEBRUARY 2024 • ISSUE 170 • IDEAS SPECIAL

# MONOCLE

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- Meet Iceland's first lady
- Sniffing out art's aromas

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- Toyota's boxy new beauty
- Azabudai Hills hits the spot
- Designing better in Ticino

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- A rosy 'riad' rethought
- Seeing Swiss Jura by road

Our editors' top tips for the year to come  
INSIDE: *How to hit your stride, find inspiration and seek success.*

## Time for a reboot?

Urgent journalism  
Warm welcomes  
How to make a city  
Ageing gracefully

Emergency fixes  
Make something  
Switch gear  
Artful residencies

High art in Aspen  
Refresh your brand  
Start a new chapter  
Work up a sweat

Build a new home  
Draft in a designer  
Define your uniform  
Get it made afresh

Rethink the regime  
Stay on an island  
Get a little steamy  
Head to the shops

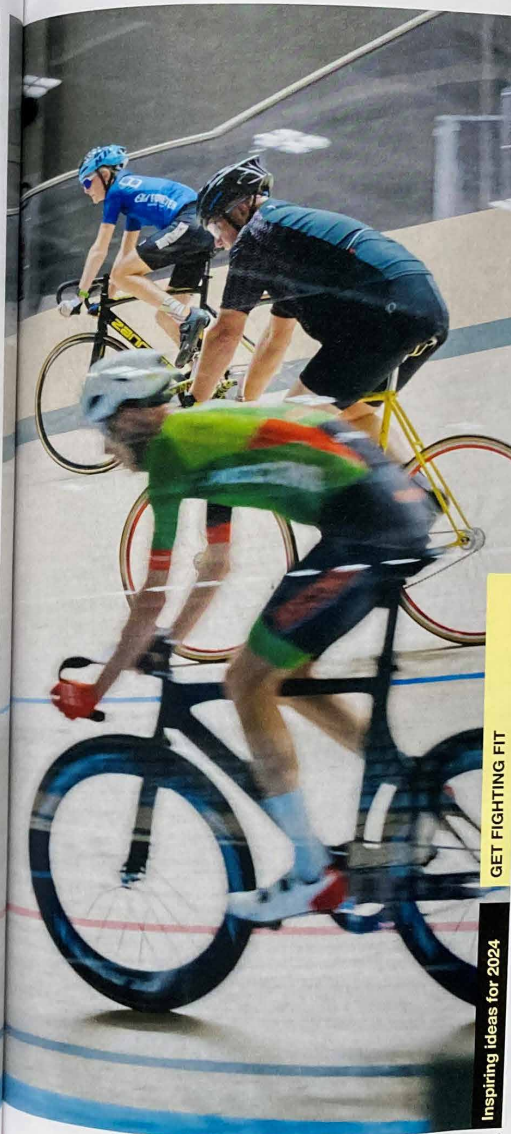


## 20 inspiring ideas for 2024

Looking to get a jump on the months ahead? Expect agenda-setting advice, the people to meet, places to see and ideas to embrace. The new year starts here.

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2 DESIGN: Architecture

## I2. Cycle of life *Limburg*

The latest velodrome and sports complex to open in Belgium puts its users' needs front and centre. It shows why, sometimes, getting your ideas on track takes a nudge rather than a revolution.

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PHOTOGRAPHY  
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Keen to work up a sweat? The *wieleroom*, or velodrome, in the Belgian province of Limburg commissioned by the municipality of Heusden-Zolder (population 33,000) and the Flemish sports agency Sport Vlaanderen is just the place. The building, which opened in late 2023, houses a sports complex with an indoor racing track, which is set to host a series of the European Track Championships in the next few years. It is a flexible space where people of all ages and fitness levels, from international competitors to recreational athletes, are welcome. The outcome is a facility that both locals and touring professionals can enjoy.

"Sportspeople spend hours training in these kinds of buildings. For them, it is like an office or living room," says Sven Grooten, general director of B-architecten, the Belgian architecture firm that won the competition to design the complex. "As architects designing these spaces, we must ask, 'What is the light like? Can you see some trees or is there a terrace where you can take a break?' If we can bring in this quality of life, it will attract people."

It's a sentiment with which Karin Hupperts, the project leader at B-architecten, agrees. "When you design a sports complex, you must look at the project through the eyes of sportspeople, visitors and members of staff," says Hupperts, a former athlete and keen cyclist who specialises in sports-facilities architecture. "Their wellbeing matters."

For the project, the architects joined forces with DBV Architecten, which is based in the nearby town of Hasselt, and whose staff were able to visit the construction site regularly. Their presence was essential as the team worked on narrow trapezoidal terrain and an ambitious list of requirements. Essential inclusions were a 250 metre racetrack, 1,000 fixed seats (and another 1,000 mobile seats), courts for

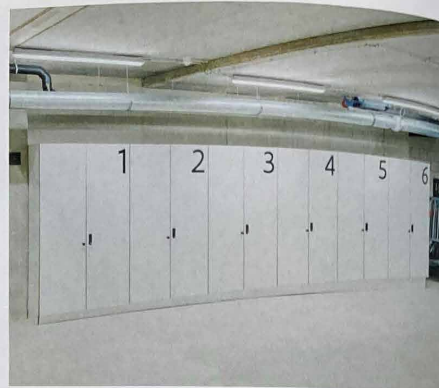
GET FIGHTING FIT

Inspiring ideas for 2024





2



1



3

*Previous spread*  
1. Volleyball practice  
2. After-work cycling

*This spread*  
1. What's your number?  
2. Cyclists can bring their own bikes or hire them onsite  
3. The space can be used for a variety of sports  
4. Some users are head over heels  
5. The velodrome has 1,000 fixed seats  
6. People of all ages are welcome  
7. Courts in the centre of the cycling track



4



6



5



7





"When you design a sports complex, you must look at the project through the eyes of sportspeople, visitors and members of staff"

basketball, badminton, football and volleyball, a gym, medical centre for the neighbouring Circuit Zolder motorsport racetrack and fitness room. To accommodate everything, the architects came up with a single building with courts in the centre of the cycling track. Made of Finnish pine by German company Velotrack International, the track was modelled on the Tissot Velodrome in Grenchen, Switzerland, and optimised for top performance. Changing rooms fit neatly under the stalls. "Every square metre is accounted for," says Hupperts. The one-building design has a further advantage: sportspeople from various disciplines can interact. "It is good for sportspeople to meet, including for the atmosphere in the building," says Hupperts. "It is like an Olympic Village."

Inside, there is a sense of openness, with a view of the cycling track from the café upstairs, and wide corridors can comfortably accommodate cyclists with their bikes or a crowd of spectators. Interior windows offer views of the gym below. The architects stuck to a palette of black, yellow, grey and white, which recurs throughout, from the lockers to the racing bikes by Belgian brand Ridley Bikes that can be hired on site (cyclists can also store their own in lockers inside the complex). "We wanted to build a timeless building. The idea is that sportspeople are the ones who bring in colour with their flashy gear," says DBV's Robin Jame, who led the project with Luc Baert.

The complex is the second Union Cycliste Internationale-approved cycling track to be built in Flanders (the first is the Eddy Merckx track in Ghent, also designed by B-architecten) and both are informed by Hupperts' personal experience. "When I was an athlete, we spent the whole day training indoors without daylight. Here, you can see that it is daytime," she says, gesturing at the windows and the trees beyond. To add more light, the architects incorporated translucent skylights that bring in natural light while avoiding glare on the track, which could distract the cyclists.

The *wielerdroom* has already become a fixture in the local community as a place to watch and play sport, book a cycling initiation session, work up a sweat in the fitness room or simply catch up over a beer. "As an architect, you want to design a nice building," says Jame as cyclists whizz around the track below. "Here you have to be humble and put the people who will use the complex first." — M

**Monocle comment:** Good design can anchor a community. When Monocle visits the *wielerdroom*, the complex is buzzing. Friends chat as they prepare their bikes, volleyball players warm up for practice and visitors watch from the café.