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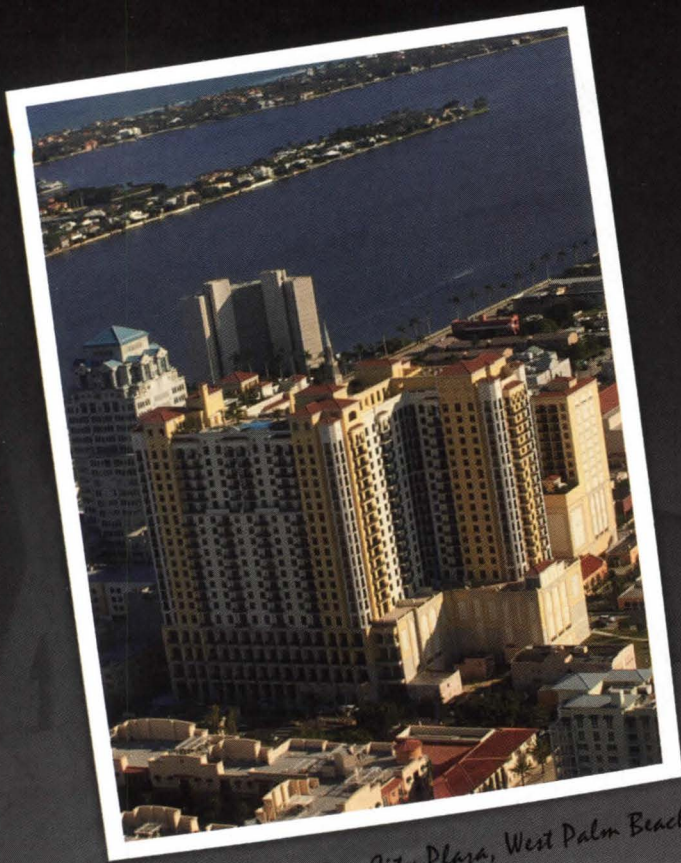
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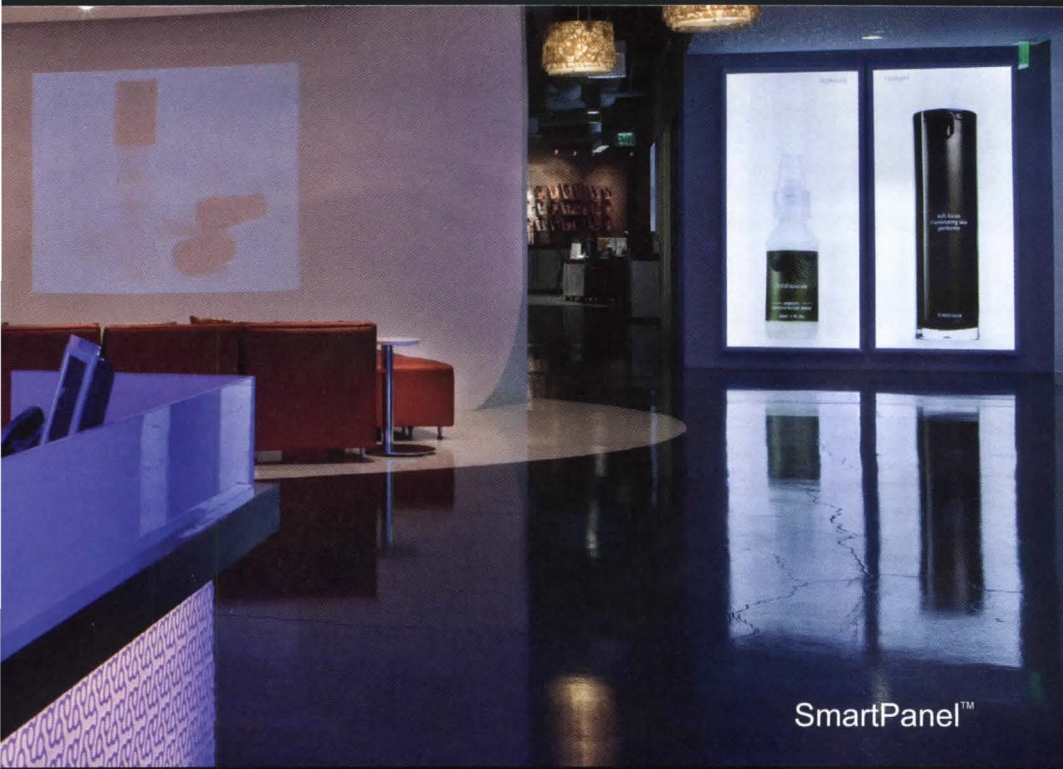
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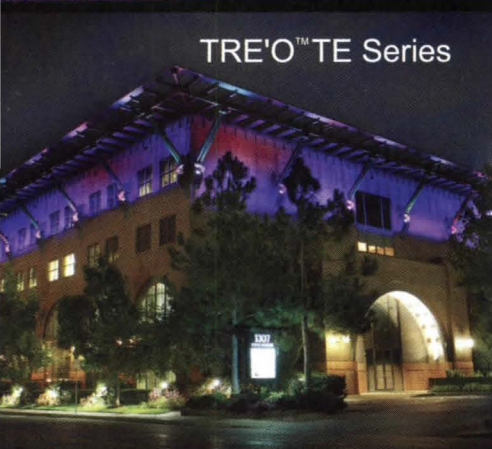
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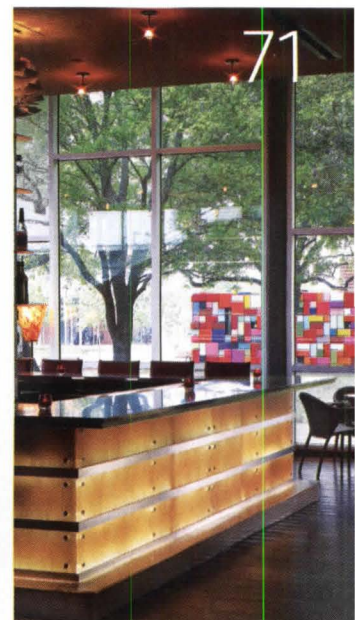
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“THE WORLD NEEDS ROBIN HOODS WHO CAN OPERATE AT A GLOBAL, CORPORATE SCALE.”

HEROES, NOT STARS

EVERYONE AT THE P/A AWARDS dinner in New York last month was talking about the fire at Rem Koolhaas's CCTV complex in Beijing. The event had occurred just the night before, and people were passing around their BlackBerries and iPhones, showing off Photoshopped pictures of Godzilla and the Transformers swarming around the burning Mandarin Oriental Hotel. The initial spark came from Chinese New Year fireworks, and many in that country saw the resulting conflagration as an alarmingly inauspicious way to begin the Year of the Ox.

Back in Manhattan, the P/A partygoers interpreted the blaze in an equally dark, if architecture-centric way—as symbolizing the collapse of starchitecture and the blockbuster building. I was blown away to witness a roomful of celebrated architects discussing in all earnestness the failings of celebrity architecture. Clearly, the profession's value system is undergoing an epochal shift, with at least one positive result: an increasingly widespread recognition of architecture as a collaborative endeavor, not simply the result of a singular creative vision. But the profession still needs role models. Who can we look up to, if not our stars?

Of all the design stars who shined in the '90s and early '00s, two at least stand out as heroes for today: Sam Mockbee, who died in 2001, and whose important work at the Rural Studio continues; and Glenn Murcutt, the 2009 AIA Gold Medalist. History will remember them well, for prioritizing sustainability and the social good over self-aggrandizement and the big commission.

Opting out of the mainstream to help the needy is a profoundly noble act, but the world also needs Robin Hoods who can operate at a global, corporate scale. Alas, the path of virtue is long, arduous, and fraught with temptation, especially when that path cuts through places like Beverly Hills and Park Avenue. Witness William McDonough, the self-anointed prophet of sustainable design to the rich and powerful.

McDonough's buildings, for all their green features, have never struck me as particularly well designed,

but there's no denying his marketing skills. Even these failed him when a bruising profile, “Green Guru Gone Wrong,” appeared in the November 2008 issue of *Fast Company*. Perhaps the most damning quote came from UC Berkeley's Harrison Fraker:

Sustainable design started long before McDonough even opened his office ... McDonough gets credit for everything because he is such a good promoter of all the good things he has done ... I hate to see false myths perpetuated.

Hagiography is a dangerous business, so it is with some caution that I offer up one of my own heroes for general consumption: David Hovey, the wrongly overlooked architect of the 650-unit Old Orchard Woods condominiums in Skokie, Ill. (page 63). I've never met the man, but I came to admire his work during my tenure as curator of the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Hovey attended IIT, and he teaches there now, and one look at his buildings makes the association clear. In a city that struggles to meet the high standards of its own architectural history, Hovey's design sensibility is environmentally responsible, rigorously modernist, and quietly confident. He does not strive for the heroic statement, and in so doing attains something greater.

Hovey maintains quality not through self-aggrandizement or by grandstanding in the face of opposition, but through a business model that gives him control of capital and production. In other words, Hovey serves as his own developer and general contractor. He's one architect who isn't afraid of a balance sheet, or of getting his hands dirty. Now that's heroic.

Reel Crane

Political Maneuver

I was a consultant on the Lake Elsinore competition [February 2009, page 73]. The reason it was canceled had more to do with architectural expression than downtown circulation. Some of the power brokers insisted that Lake Elsinore should look like Santa Fe.

G. Stanley Collyer

Editor, *Competitions*
Louisville, Ky.

ARCHITECT Regrets

We named Teddy Cruz as a juror for the Lake Elsinore competition; he did not serve due to scheduling conflicts. • In “Role Models” [January 2009, page 36], we reported that SOM uses BIM for 15 percent of its projects; the correct percentage is 85. • And we failed to identify Light This as consultant in “Sushi Spotlight” [February 2009, page 36].

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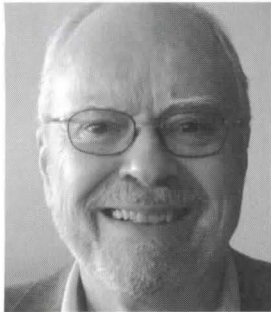
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John Morris Dixon
Contributing editor,
Past Progressives

AN ARCHITECTURE GRADUATE of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, John Morris Dixon gave up the drafting board in 1960 for architectural journalism. Following staff positions at *Progressive Architecture (P/A)* and *Architectural Forum*, he served as editor of *P/A* from 1972 to 1996. During his career, he has observed 29 *P/A* Awards juries in action. With his staff colleagues, he strove to ensure that entries were legitimate, juries diverse, and judging unbiased.

Beginning this month, Dixon joins ARCHITECT as a regular contributor to the Past Progressives department, which recalls notable *P/A*-winning designs and reveals the built projects they grew into. Dixon writes that he is "gratified that these awards have helped assure the completion and design integrity of winning projects—as in the case of the Myriad Gardens" (page 80). Just as satisfying, he says, is the awards' role in launching the careers of countless talented professionals, while often confirming the continued creativity of established firms. Dixon says he is "particularly pleased that this program has flourished for 56 years, now sustained by the third magazine to sponsor it."

A fellow of the AIA, Dixon is active on its national Committee on Design, which he has chaired. He has served on numerous design competition juries and architect selection committees. He continues to write

and edit for a variety of publications. In recent years, he has written for *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, *Competitions*, *Domus*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, *House and Garden*, *Officeinsight*, and *Places*. Books he has written include *The World Bank: Kohn Pedersen Fox and the Architecture of a Landmark Building* (Images, 2002).

With the support of a Graham Foundation grant, Dixon is currently at work on a book tracing the turbulent course of modern architecture from the 1950s to the present. □

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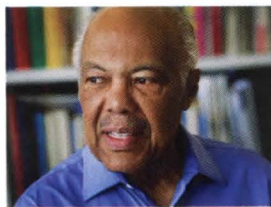


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THE ROOF WASN'T the only thing on fire when part of Beijing's CCTV complex, designed by Rem Koolhaas, was destroyed by fireworks-induced flames on Feb. 9. Beijing lifted a fireworks ban in 2005.



MAX BOND JR., noted architect and educator, died on Feb. 18 at age 73.



CHICAGO'S LANDMARK ordinance—which covers buildings and districts like East Village (above)—was found on Jan. 30 to be unconstitutional by a state appellate court. The court said the ordinance criteria are “vague, ambiguous, and overly broad.” We object.



SVERRE FEHN, Pritzker Prize-winning architect, died Feb. 23 at age 84.

A High-Drama Month in D.C.

STIMULUS, AT LAST, BUT THE AIA ISN'T COMPLETELY HAPPY. PLUS: OBAMA NAMES HIS CHIEF OF URBAN AFFAIRS.

Feb. 2–6

The American Institute of Architects sends 900 members to Washington to lobby Congress to include more infrastructure spending in the stimulus package, and not to limit spending to projects that are ready to start now. “There’s going to be money in the package for infrastructure, and our message is, ‘That’s great, but when we build things, let’s make sure we build them better.’ Which means we have green buildings in there, better schools, and mass transit, and not just new roads,” says AIA senior director of federal relations Andrew Goldberg.

Feb. 9–13

The \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is finalized by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. “You’re looking at \$140 billion at least for infrastructure in this package,” says Will Straw, associate director for economic growth at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C. The AIA calls the stimulus bill a start, although it is disappointed more money was not allocated for school modernization. In fact, no stimulus money is allocated specifically for

school construction projects. The bill sets aside \$105.9 billion for investments in education and training, of which \$39.5 billion “can be used for preventing cutbacks, preventing layoffs, school modernization, or other purposes,” the bill states. Schools may also have access to \$8.8 billion in funding given to states for “high priority needs,” which could include education, and modernization and renovation of school and higher education facilities. “We’re really going to make the case to state education agencies and school districts that the quality of the building is just as important as the quality of the teachers,” says Goldberg.

Feb. 16–20

To introduce a concerned public to the \$787 billion federal economic stimulus plan, which President Barack Obama signs on Feb. 17, the White House launches a website (recovery.gov) that explains the massive effort’s ins and outs.

And Obama makes good on one campaign promise, appointing Bronx Borough president Adolfo Carrión Jr. to lead the new White House Office of Urban Affairs.

ETHAN BUTTERFIELD

54 feet

The length of the Community Chalkboard, a Charlottesville, Va., Peter O’Shea and Robert Winstead-designed monument to free expression and one of five 2009 Rudy Bruner Award finalists.

SOURCE: BRUNERFOUNDATION.ORG

More AIA Awards

2009 Young Architects Award

Matthew Bremer, Architecture in Formation, New York
Angela Brooks, Pugh + Scarpa, Santa Monica, Calif.
Matthew Kreilich, Julie Snow Architects, Minneapolis
Haril Pandya, CBT, Boston
Jinhee Park, Single Speed Design, Cambridge, Mass.
Camilo Parra, Parra Design Group, Houston
Tania Salgado, RNL, Denver
Michael Schellin, Kodet Architectural Group, Minneapolis

2009 Latrobe Prize

Archeworks and UrbanLab, Chicago
The Latrobe Prize is a \$100,000 biennial grant for research, awarded by the AIA College of Fellows. Sarah Dunn and Martin Felsen, principals of UrbanLab and co-directors of Archeworks, the alternative design school in Chicago, won for their proposal “Growing Energy/Water: Using the Grid to Get off the Grid.”

JANUARY 2009
ARCHITECTURE
BILLINGS INDEX

↓ 33.3

- ↓ 39.6 mixed practice
- ↓ 37.1 institutional
- = 29.5 multifamily residential
- ↑ 33.8 commercial & industrial

SOURCE: AIA

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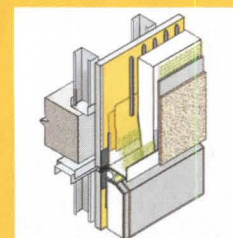
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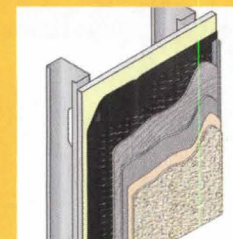
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BUSINESS



TEXT BY EDWARD KEEGAN
PORTRAIT BY MATT GREENSLADE

→ BEST PRACTICES

The Extra Mile

HOW TO ADD VALUE WITHOUT INCREASING EXPENSES.

Jason Friedman, CEO of Creative Realities, a branding and customer-experience consultancy in New Jersey.

JASON FRIEDMAN'S EARLY CAREER in theater and as a concert roadie gave him insight into managing complex logistical and performance-based tasks. So he knows better than anyone that positive experiences don't happen by chance. The 36-year-old is founder and CEO of Fairfield, N.J.-based Creative Realities (CRI), which has consulted on "experiential marketing" since its start in 1997. As Friedman tells his clients (many of whom are architects and other designers), great service isn't about

adding to your overhead; it's about building a service mentality into your business structure.

How do we start adding value?

Understand clients' expectations and set them on a formal basis: "This is what is going to happen when you work with us." Be deliberate about it. These things





don't happen by accident; it's with intent. We talk about the "wow" factor—a surprise of an elevated magnitude. To wow your customer, you need to set expectations at a certain level, and then you need to overdeliver.

Ask, "What is going to make our clients love us?" It's not the architecture—they can go anywhere for that. It's all the stuff beyond. Getting a cool design is not a surprise for the client. That's why they hired you.

An example?

Build a system. Commit to returning phone calls within four hours. To do that, you need to have somebody checking your voice mail, transcribing it, and sending it to a group distribution list—you keep everybody in the loop and there's lots of collaboration.

And be proactive: Don't let clients know a deliverable will be late at the deadline. People set their schedules based on the agreed time. It results in frustration, anger, and no loyalty if they can't depend on you.

And the message is?

Reliability. Your buildings are reliable. Your employees are reliable. Don't have misspellings on your drawings. It's not difficult or complicated.

Another example?

Have someone sit in the meeting and do quick sketches that are presented to the client at the end of the meeting. Show visually—"We heard you."

That's not a given, but it's not unheard of ...

Have someone take notes during every meeting on a tablet PC and send it at the end of the meeting—from the same room. It's handwritten, but you have them right away. Then, e-mail the handwritten notes to an assistant at the office to type up, and send them to the entire distribution list within an hour.

But meetings can take a lot of time ...

Control the process. Send weekly updates via e-mail with an action item list for the week: Here's where we are, here's what we're working on. Have a weekly scheduled call—block out the time—but if you've covered all the items, let the client cancel it. Most weeks, they will.

When can an architect ask for extras?

If the perception in your customer's mind is that you're overdelivering all the time, they're going to say yes when you ask for an extra. There has to be a perception of value for everything you do.

You may not charge, but don't ever do anything for free. If you do something, send an invoice with a credit and a \$0 balance. That makes you a good guy. If you don't send that, they don't know that you're a good guy. □

→ TRAVEL

S.F. Hooky

TAKE A BREAK DURING THE AIA CONVENTION IN SAN FRANCISCO. WE KNOW YOU'LL WANT TO.

TEXT BY MARGOT CARMICHAEL LESTER

DINING



Coi

373 Broadway (Telegraph Hill) • 415.393.9000 • coirestaurant.com • 11-course fixed-price menu: \$120; a la carte (lounge only): \$4–\$19/dish

Pronounced "kwa." Inventive Northern Californian cuisine by chef Daniel Patterson, harvested from area producers.

House of Nanking

919 Kearny St. (Financial District) • 415.421.1429 • \$6–\$12/dish

"Tell the chef-owner, Peter Fang, what meats, vegetables, and styles you like. He'll take care of the rest. Food will arrive, and you'll leave happy." —Joseph Marshall, project manager, Stantec

Luce ↑

888 Howard St. (South of Market) • 415.616.6566 • lucewinerestaurant.com • \$29–\$38/person

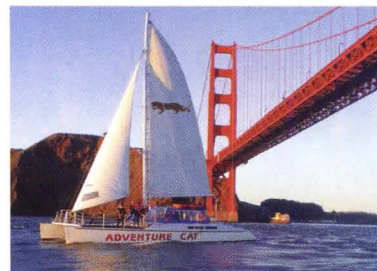
Pronounced "LOO-chay." Sophisticated Californian/Northern Italian fare and an extensive wine list.

Ti Couz

3108 16th St. (Mission) • 415.252.7373 • \$7–\$12

Offers a wide selection of sweet and savory crepes, including a wicked Nutella option.

ACTIVITIES



Adventure Cat Sailing Charters ↑

Pier 39, Dock J (North Waterfront) • adventurecat.com • Adults: \$30–\$45; children 6–12: \$15

Pack your Top-Siders for these afternoon and sunset cruises.

Exploratorium

3601 Lyon St. (The Presidio) • exploratorium.edu • Adults: \$14; seniors/students/youth: \$11; children 4–12: \$9

"Like to tinker? Are you a gadgeteer? Get ready for hands-on sensory overload." —Robert Shurell, project manager, Stantec

Musee Mecanique

Pier 45, Shed A (North Waterfront) • museemechanique.org • Free admission; most machines take quarters

Dedicated to the preservation and celebration of coin-operated musical instruments and antique arcade machines.

ARCHITECTURE



← **California Academy of Sciences**
55 Music Concourse Dr. (Golden Gate Park) • calacademy.org • Adults: \$24.95; seniors: \$19.95
Renzo Piano's celebrated green cornucopia.

De Young Museum

50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr. (Golden Gate Park) • famsf.org • Adults: \$10; seniors: \$7

Herzog & de Meuron's copper-clad machine for art, in a landscape designed by gifted local Walter Hood.

San Francisco Federal Building

90 Seventh St. (South of Market) • gsa.gov • Lobby and other spaces open to the public; ID required

Thom Mayne's revolutionary, hyper-sustainable office building features—gasp!—windows that open. It also demonstrates the supreme value of the GSA's Design Excellence Program.

Contemporary Jewish Museum

736 Mission St. (South of Market) • thecjm.org • Adults: \$10; seniors: \$8

Designed by Daniel Libeskind. Architecture tours at 2 p.m. daily.

Fairmont Hotel

950 Mason St. (Nob Hill) • fairmont.com • Walk around: free; rooms: \$239–\$399/night

Restored by Julia Morgan after the 1906 quake. "The highlight for me is the Tonga Room. Come for the happy-hour drinks, stay for the band." —Christopher May, architect, Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects

Mission Dolores

3321 16th St. (Mission) • missiondolores.org • Free, but donations appreciated

Dedicated in 1791, it's the oldest building in the city and the oldest intact mission in all of California. Tours 8 a.m.–4 p.m. daily.

Phelan Building

760 Market St. (Union Square) • Walk around: free

In a city of flatiron buildings, William Curlett's 11-story masterpiece from 1908 is arguably the most compelling.

3.2%

The annual rate of increase in U.S. worker productivity from October to December. America's worker bees helped their companies' bottom lines, but their industriousness resulted from employers trimming 1.5 million staff and slashing hours at the fastest rate since 1975.

SOURCE: BLOOMBERG.COM, 2.5.09

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TEXT BY JOHN GENDALL
PORTRAIT BY JEFFREY ZELEVANSKY

"The word 'fathom' is about depth," says Christine Astorino, referring to the name of her firm, which she launched after nearly a decade in landscape architecture. "Since our process is very fluid, it also relates to water, and to things bubbling to the surface."

→SPECIALIST

Going Deeper

DESIGN CONSULTANCY FATHOM GETS TO THE HEART OF WHAT CLIENTS REALLY WANT.

WHEN CHRISTINE ASTORINO takes on a design project, she dispenses with the typical designer-patron interview, which generally doesn't get beyond a rote series of questions. Instead, Astorino sends clients to the proverbial couch to plumb their underlying and often inexpressible objectives, using a process that combines architecture, psychology, and art therapy. She does this through Fathom, the consultancy she founded in 2003 to help architects discover their clients' unspoken needs. **About 95 percent of what people think and feel remains unspoken, says Astorino, and architects usually work only with the articulated 5 percent.** "That's just scratching the surface," she says. Fathom aims to comprehend, and design for, the elusive 95 percent.

The firm's typical approach involves assembling a multidisciplinary team for each project: psychologists, anthropologists, color experts, and designers from other disciplines. The team then works with clients in what Astorino calls a "sensory exploration," establishing the

clients' needs beyond what they may say to an architect. **"If I bring an ethnographer to an interview," she says, "they notice things that an average designer wouldn't."**

Fathom operates under the aegis of Astorino, the Pittsburgh architecture firm founded by Louis Astorino, Christine's father. The practices have collaborated on several projects—including the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and a library in Canonsburg, Pa.—but Fathom also works with other firms. It assisted HOK Sport with Consol Energy Center, the arena for Pittsburgh's National Hockey League team that will open in 2010. Most recently, however, Fathom helped Astorino with the new Veterans Recovery Center for the H. John Heinz III Progressive Care Center, a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) campus in Pittsburgh.

Tim Powers, the principal in charge of Astorino's healthcare studio, worked with Fathom on the VA center,





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which opened last November. “I’m an architect,” he says. “I think like an architect, and when you ask an architect a question, you get an architectural answer. And if an architect is at a meeting, even clients start talking architecturally. At the beginning of the VA project, we were not ready to talk about an architectural solution. We were trying to get the big picture.”

The old recovery center, says Astorino, was basic dormitory-style living: “a series of small bedrooms and one community room with a blaring television.” The facility accommodates veterans for three to six months, rehabilitating them from chemical dependency, mental illness, or homelessness and moving them back to an independent life—a task made more challenging in a space that resembles college housing.

“For the VA project,” says Astorino, “we used our team to observe and understand the veterans in their environment.” **The team conducted one-on-one interviews with specific users, followed by focus group meetings to discuss the results.** “We found they wanted more connection to the outdoors, more connection to family, and an environment that seemed more residential.”

In response, the architects designed a campus that was more hamlet, less dormitory: seven houses, all with porches and balconies, clustered around an open space, plus abundant places for patients and visitors to meet. The result is a 98-bed campus with 61,000 square feet of living space that—with its pitched roofs and colorful siding—resembles a suburban side street instead of a medical facility.

“Fathom allows us to get to our clients and to understand who they are and what they want to happen,” says Powers, adding that the firm “prepare[s] a booklet for us that we refer to throughout the design process, so everyone feels connected to the project.”

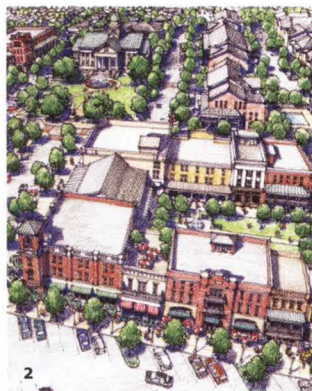
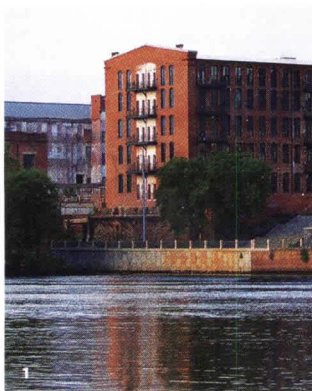
For Astorino, Fathom is the result of a lifelong connection to architecture. But it is her time at Penn State, where she earned a B.S. in landscape architecture, that she calls a formative experience in the development of her consultancy. “Landscape architecture made me more humble,” says Astorino, who practiced for nearly a decade. “It teaches you to be integrated with the site and the user.

“As designers,” she continues, “we always think things have to be two things: functional and aesthetic. But we are beginning to understand that people need to resonate with things emotionally for a project to be successful.” □

→ LOCAL MARKET

Columbus, Ga.

TEXT BY MARGOT CARMICHAEL LESTER



AFTER ITS FOUNDING, IN 1828, Columbus, Ga., was a textile town. Cotton was the cash crop, and its manufacture was the primary industry. But as the 20th century progressed and farms and mills became less profitable, the city—just two hours south of Atlanta on the Chattahoochee River—diversified. “Columbus is now the home of a variety of ‘home-grown’ industries, from banking, investment, and insurance to high-tech materials fabrication and aircraft manufacturing,” says Timothy Jensen, managing director of local firm Hecht Burdeshaw Architects.

The latter industries were spurred by the presence of the Fort Benning Army base, which was established in 1918. But the base doesn’t just propel industry—it’s becoming the main population driver since it was chosen for expansion by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) in 2005.

“Our region will experience approximately 12 percent growth in population within the next three years,” explains Michael Dunbar, senior vice president of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. “That equates to roughly 30,000 new residents.” As a result, building is booming as developers and town officials brace for increased demand for on- and off-base housing, medical facilities, and schools.

“According to a *Wall Street Journal* story, the estimated economic impact of the Super Bowl on Tampa is \$300 million,” Dunbar says. “The impact of BRAC on the Columbus region is more than 10.6 times more than the Super Bowl in construction alone.” □

1. Eagle & Phenix Mills

ARCHITECTS: Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein, Atlanta (lead architect); Barnes & Co. Architects, Columbus. **COMPLETION:** 2009. **BRIEF:** Mixed-use redevelopment of one of the South’s largest textile mills.

2. Koonce Place

ARCHITECTS: HighGrove Partners, Austell, Ga. (site plan); Historical Concepts, Peachtree City, Ga. (residential design). **COMPLETION:** 2011. **BRIEF:** Includes 700 homes and 44 multifamily residences.

3. St. Francis Hospital Medical Office Building

ARCHITECTS: Howell Rusk Dodson, Atlanta (lead architect); Andras Allen Starr Architecture, Columbus. **COMPLETION:** 2011. **BRIEF:** A \$100 million, 400,000-s.f. addition for a growing population.

4. The Villages of Benning

ARCHITECTS: Torti Gallas and Partners, Silver Spring, Md. (new construction); Andras Allen Starr Architecture (renovations). **COMPLETION:** 2015. **BRIEF:** For the Army base, 3,185 new single- and multifamily units and 239 renovated homes.

POPULATION/EMPLOYMENT

2008 population: 187,046. Fort Benning’s growth is expected to create 17,000 jobs.

RESIDENTIAL MARKET

2008 median home value: \$119,600.

MARKET STRENGTHS

- Public-private partnerships
- Relatively affordable housing
- Consolidated city/county government

MARKET CONCERNS

- Urgent need for schools
- Strained infrastructure
- Managing sprawl

FORECAST

“Some [are] scared to move forward,” says Leah Braxton, vice president of W.C. Bradley Co. Real Estate. Bradley, however, is continuing its Eagle & Phenix Mills project and working on others. “Growth is coming. We need to make the best of this wonderful economic impact. If we plan well, many will reap rewards.”



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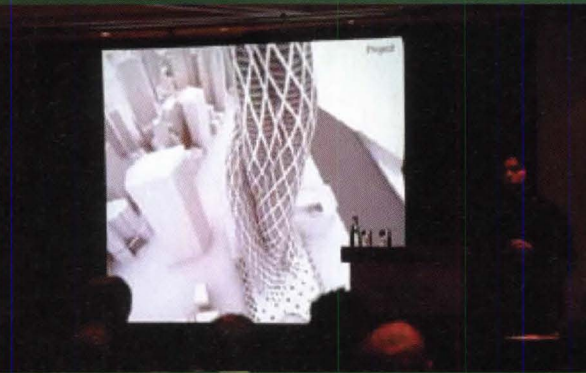


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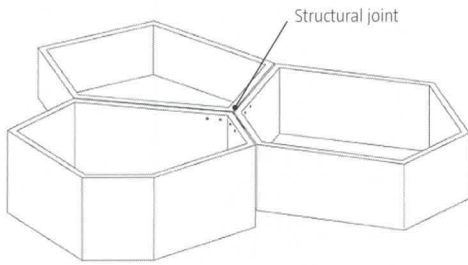
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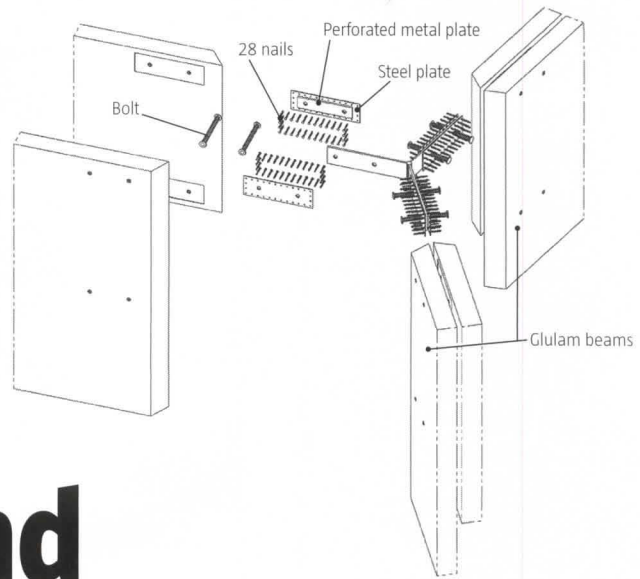


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→DETAIL

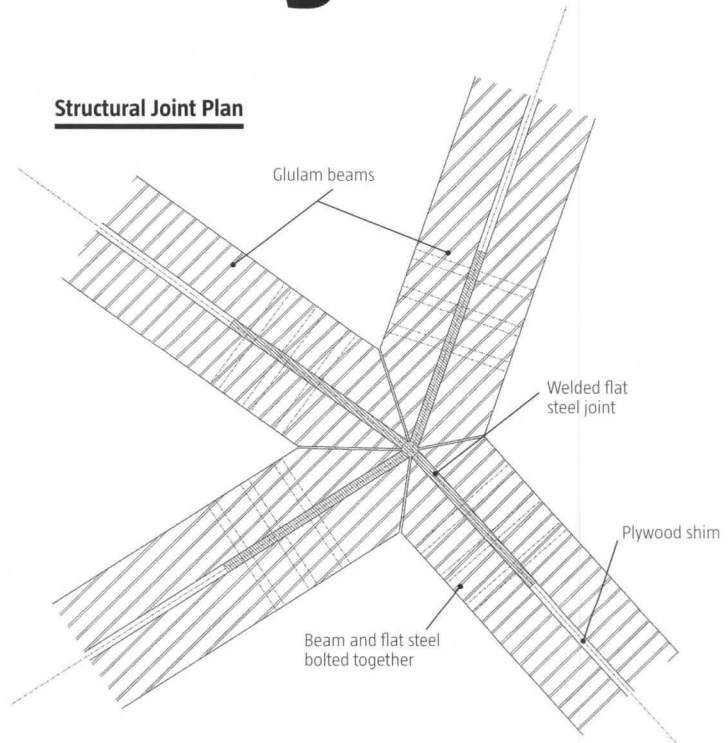
Restaurant and Event Space Ceiling

Architect: Barkow Leibinger Architekten
 Location: Trumpf Campus, Stuttgart, Germany

1,614
Feet

The height of Kohn Pedersen Fox's Shanghai World Financial Center. The tallest building finished in 2008, it's also the second tallest completed building in the world, after Taipei 101.

Structural Joint Plan



SOURCE: CTBUH.ORG, 1.26.09



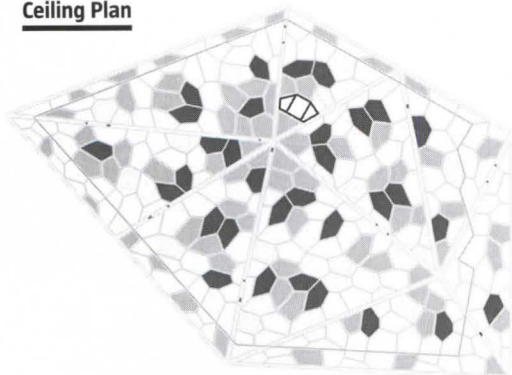


DAVID FRANCK



Each cell in the honeycomb ceiling of Barkow Leibinger's restaurant and event space is dedicated to a specific purpose, such as lighting or acoustics. Cells that incorporate luminaires are wired on different circuits, so that all the lights don't have to be turned on at once. Tubular speakers hang from some cells to distribute sound through the space during lectures, meetings, and concerts.

Ceiling Plan



-  Skylights
-  Wooden cells with artificial lighting
-  Wooden cells with perforated acoustic surface

TEXT BY KATIE GERFEN

A NEW RESTAURANT AND EVENT SPACE serves as the social hub of the sprawling Trumpf manufacturing complex outside Stuttgart, Germany. The architects, Berlin- and New York-based Barkow Leibinger Architekten, have completed five projects on the campus. The honeycomb roof of their restaurant and event space takes its geometric cues from the surrounding buildings, including an office building that Barkow Leibinger completed in 2003. However, the firm's design inspiration for the five-sided structure is essentially organic; the roof structure itself is based, biomimetically, on the idea of cells.

"We focused on the roof from the beginning," principal Frank Barkow says. The architects worked with structural engineers to create a triangulated configuration of steel beams that would support the roof over 20-meter (approximately 65-foot) spans, allowing for a minimum of columns. Between the beams, in the place of conventional joists, are a series of pentagonal and quadrilateral cells made from fast-growth fir glulam boards stained with a white transparent coating. Glulam was a material, Barkow says, "that we were very interested in using because of its flexibility, its ease of use in CNC milling, and the idea of it being sustainable."

Each cell comprises four or five boards, laid on end and secured with a series of screws to a triple-flanged steel element at the vertex of each angle. The only adhesives used during the construction process were ecologically friendly glues. The cells serve a variety of functions: Some accommodate skylights, some house direct downlights; others filter indirect artificial light through a 3-inch-thick aluminum grating; and still others incorporate a perforated wood screen that masks acoustical felt.

The cell structure provided "a kind of pixelated surface that we could code in different ways," Barkow explains. Working with Matthias Schuler, a sustainable-energy engineer and an adjunct professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, the design team determined the function of each cell in the ceiling. The strategy proved so efficient, Barkow notes, "we actually ended up closing up some skylight cells to save on costs." □

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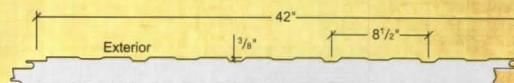
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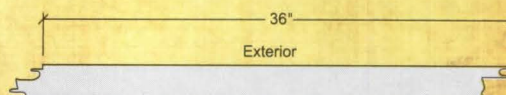
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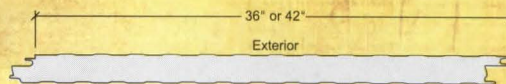
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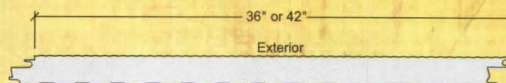
ECO-FICIENT™ *Grand*



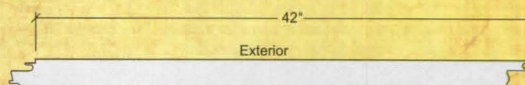
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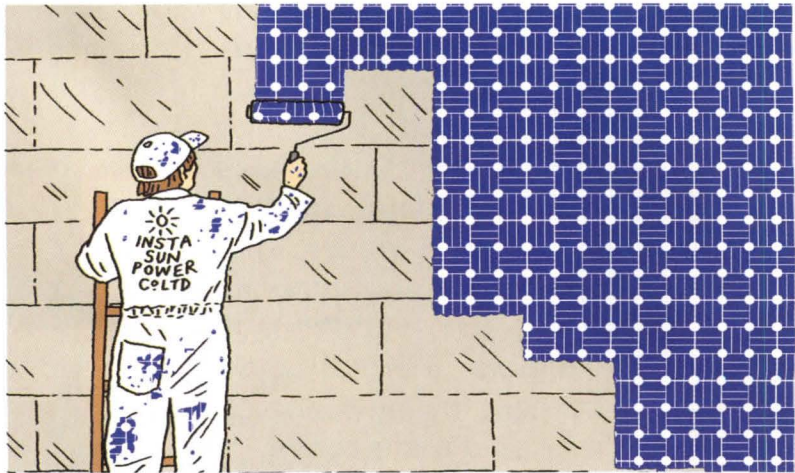


→ECO

On the Surface

'SMART PAINTS' MAKE EVERY COLOR GREEN.

TEXT BY LANCE HOSEY
ILLUSTRATION BY PETER ARKLE



BUCKMINSTER FULLER noted that technology gets smaller as it gets more sophisticated. Think of the evolution of the computer from the size of a room to the top of the desk to the palm of your hand. Today, this concept is most evident in one of construction's simplest technologies: paint.

Since cavemen began drawing on walls 40,000 years ago, the purpose of paint has been either ornamental or functional in only a limited sense, as a protective coating. And until now, sustainability in finish coatings meant reducing the number of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) off-gassed. But with the development of "smart paints," finishes are becoming more productive, replacing bulky components in filters, walls, and even mechanical systems.

Titanium dioxide coatings, such as Millennium Chemicals' product "D-NOx," absorb pollution—specifically, nitrogen oxides, which contribute to respiratory problems. Once embedded in the surface, the particulates react to ultraviolet light from the sun, break down, and become harmless. Shown to alleviate emissions by up to 60 percent, the product is being used in garages in England to reduce exhaust fumes, and Richard Meier's Jubilee Church in Rome uses it to keep the exterior finish clean. Elegant Embellishments, a British design firm, is marketing a prefabricated 3-D tile system coated in titanium dioxide. Applied as brise soleil, its weblike shape maximizes

surface area to suck up as many pollutants as possible.

Insulating paints, originally developed by the Army to camouflage tanks from heat-seeking missiles, reflect heat. ChemRex's Radiance, for example, can cut a home's HVAC costs by up to 20 percent. And thermochromic paints regulate temperature by changing color with the season—lighter in summer and darker in winter. Tested in Formula One racing as a warning system for overheated cars, thermochromic paints can be used as an architectural finish to alter indoor temperature by as much as 40 degrees.

Nanosolar is perfecting a photovoltaic paint—a finish coating that converts sunlight into energy. Already an industry leader in thin-film solar cells, the company now uses microscopic semiconductors to create a paintable PV ink that can be spread like butter on bread. Soon any surface exposed to the sun—on buildings, bridges, even cars—can become a source of energy. By replacing inefficient and costly silicon-based panels—those awkward icons of '70s-era energy conservation—photovoltaic paint promises to transform cumbersome technology into something literally skin-deep.

"Smart paint" may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it could give designers the freedom to explore sustainability's effects independent of its forms. □



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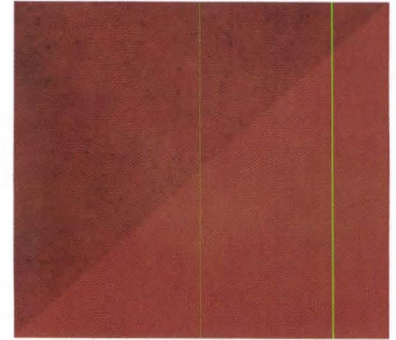
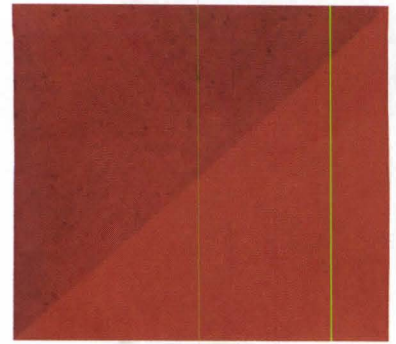
→ PRODUCTS

Finishes

Mosaic glass tile patterns make up the new **Wallpaper** collection from **Trend USA**. Available in 64 patterns, the tiles are suitable for interior or exterior application on walls, floors, or ceilings. The collection includes four themes—Academic, Euphoric, Natural, and Classic—inspired by textile and fashion resources. The tiles are either 3/4" or 5/8" square and are assembled into modules, allowing for easy design repetition. • trendgroup-usa.com • Circle 100



Being green is more colorful now that **Benjamin Moore's Natura** zero-VOC interior paint is available in all of the company's nearly 3,500 hues. Testing found that Natura releases fewer total volatile organic compounds than other zero-VOC paints. The Natura line, offered in quarts and gallons, includes a primer and three finishes (flat, eggshell, and semigloss). • benjaminmoore.com • Circle 101



A new color tint system from **Vexcon** uses three new products to add semitransparent or solid color to concrete. **StarSeal Color Cure** is applied to fresh concrete, **StarSeal Color Stain** applies a semitransparent gloss finish to new or existing concrete, and **StarSeal Color Seal** applies solid color and corrects existing color variations. • vexcon.com • Circle 102



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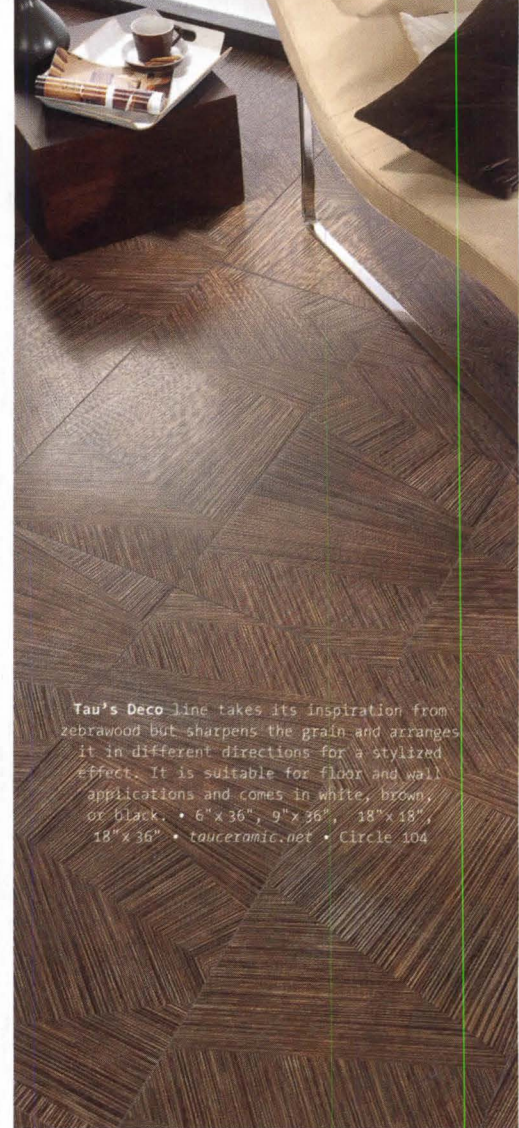


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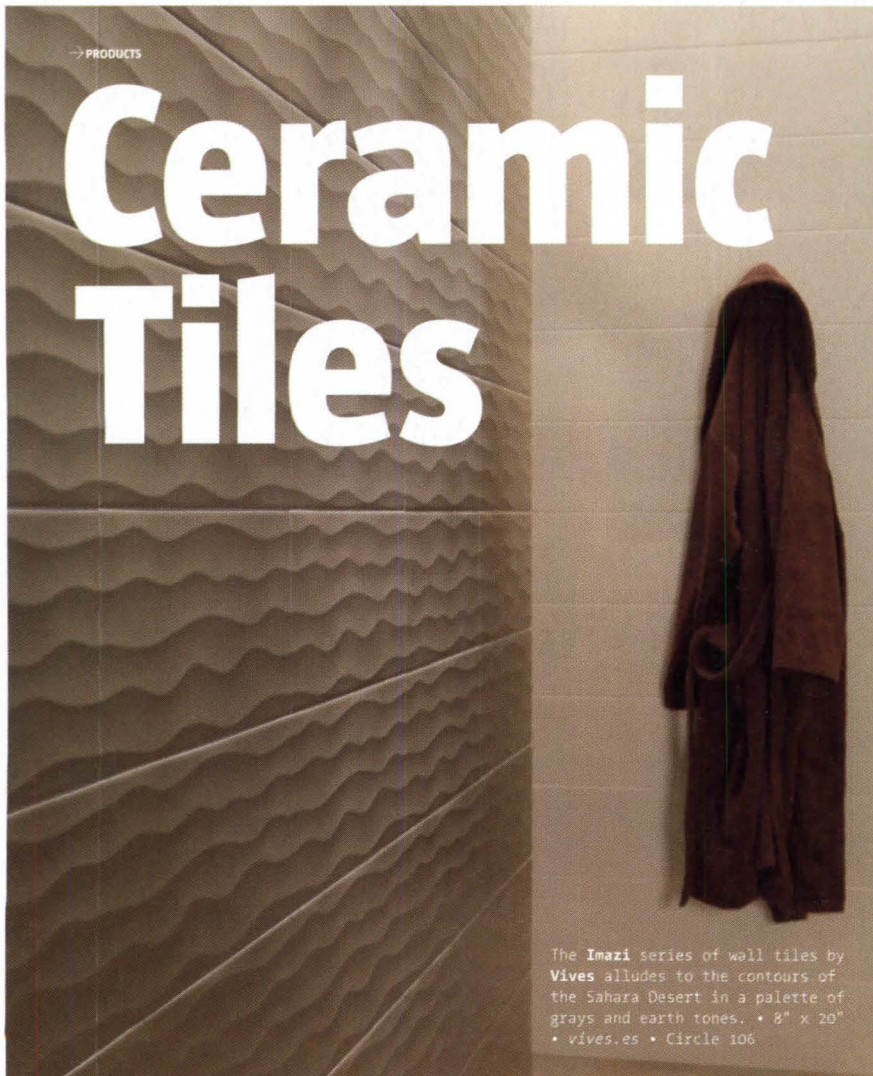
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Flush valves: flow rate of 0.7 gpf versus Industry Standard ASME A112.18.1/CSA B125.1 of 1.0 gpf.

At this year's Cevisama ceramics show in Valencia, Spain, **Inalco** (a Tile of Spain-branded manufacturer, along with the other companies on this page) launched **SlimmKer**, a new range of ultrathin porcelain tiles. The first five series within the range (shown here is **Ginza**) are digitally printed and weigh only 45 percent as much as standard tiles. The lighter weight means fewer resources are used and makes handling and installation easier. • 18" x 35" • inalco.es • Circle 103



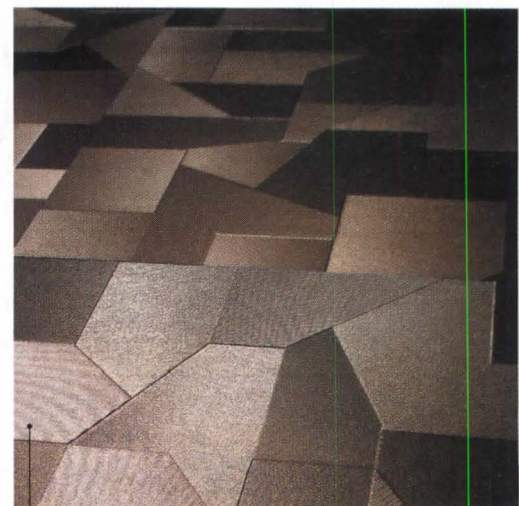
Tau's Deco line takes its inspiration from zebrawood but sharpens the grain and arranges it in different directions for a stylized effect. It is suitable for floor and wall applications and comes in white, brown, or black. • 6" x 36", 9" x 36", 18" x 18", 18" x 36" • tauceramic.net • Circle 104



→ PRODUCTS

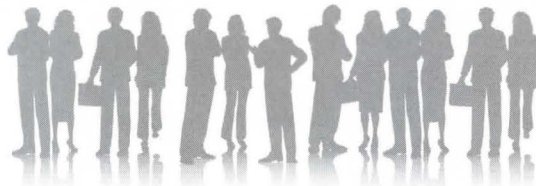
Ceramic Tiles

The **Imazi** series of wall tiles by **Vives** alludes to the contours of the Sahara Desert in a palette of grays and earth tones. • 8" x 20" • vives.es • Circle 106



Gres Catalan's Puzzle tiles combine geometric shapes with subtly contrasting tones and textures. Suitable for floor and wall applications; available in silver (above), black, and white. • 23" x 23", 16 1/2" x 23", 4" x 23" • grescatalan.com • Circle 105

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ELIGIBILITY

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PUBLICATION

The winning entries will appear in the August 2009 issue of ARCHITECT, both in print and online.

DEADLINE

Thursday, April 23, 2009
regular submission deadline
(postmark)

Monday, April 27, 2009
late submission deadline
(postmark, additional fee
is required)

FEE

First entry: \$125 first entry

Additional entries: \$75 each

Late entries: \$50 additional
fee per entry by April 27, 2009

PAPERWORK

Application forms and submission requirements are available at www.architectmagazine.com

CATEGORIES

The awards will be judged in three categories, reflecting different stages of the research and development process:

- **Prototype**—Products, materials, and systems that are in the prototyping and testing phase
- **Production**—Products, materials, and systems that are available for use
- **Application**—Products, materials, and systems as used in a single architectural project or group of related architectural projects

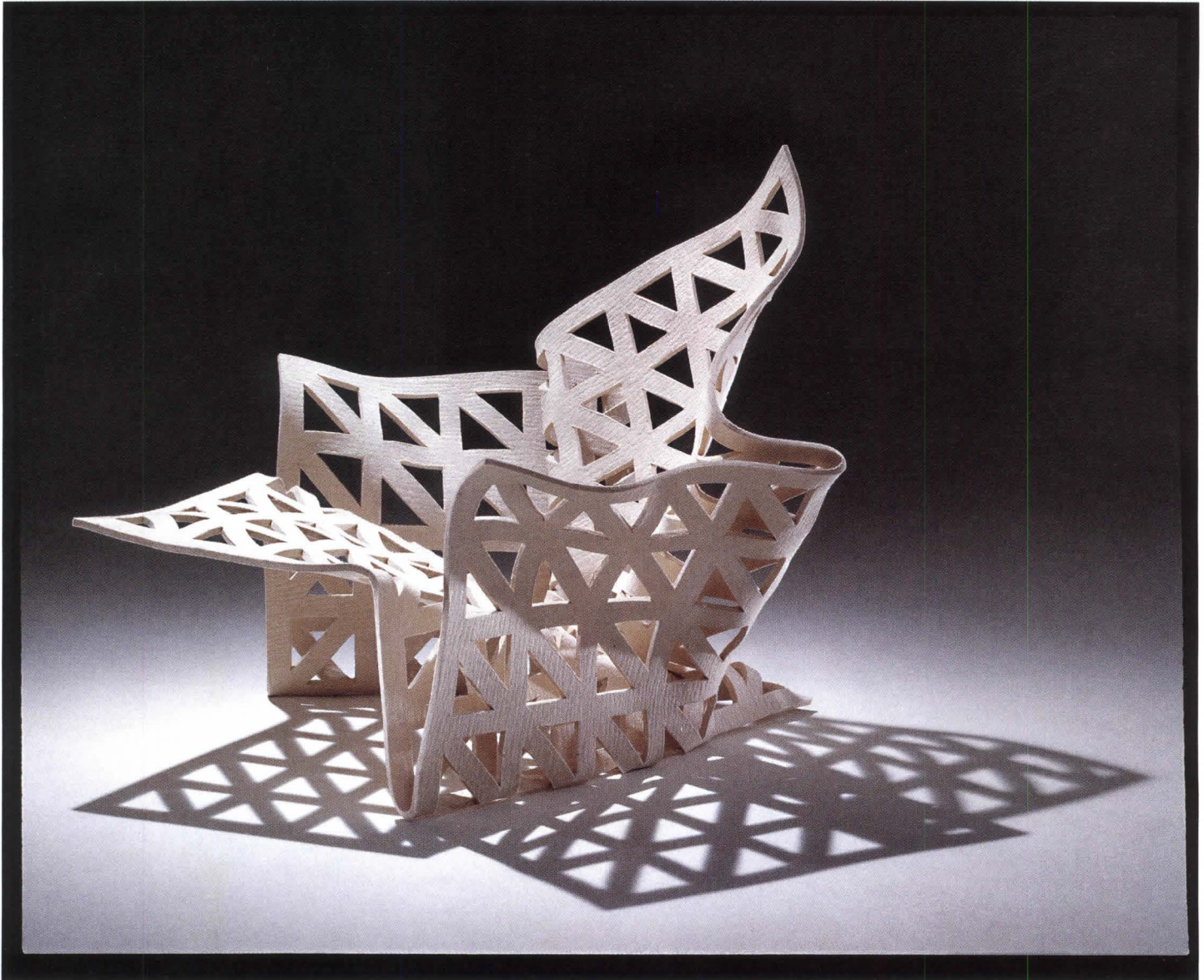
The jury will consider new materials, products, and systems as well as unconventional uses of existing materials, products, and systems. Entries will be judged for their potential or documented innovation in fabrication, assembly, installation, and performance. All entries will be judged according to their potential to advance the aesthetic, environmental, social, and technological value of architecture.

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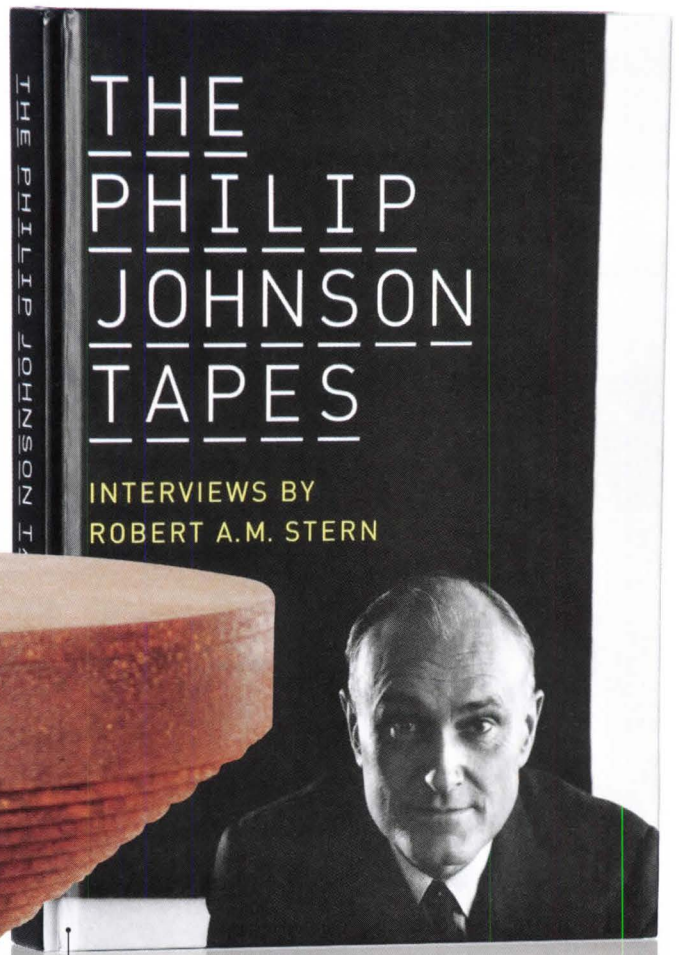


→ EXHIBIT

A beloved can-do material since at least the early Neolithic period (9000 B.C.), felt is elevated from the bolts at Jo-Ann Fabrics to the halls of the **Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum** in New York. A full-sized yurt and Louise Campbell's Bless You chair (above) join more than 70 other works of fashion, architecture, and product design in a reconsideration of felt's versatility and sustainability. Through Sept. 7. cooperhewitt.org

→ EXHIBIT

Curator Henry Urbach culls the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's** holdings for "Austere," a timely study of "reduced form and sober purpose." Thomas Ruff photographs of Mies' Barcelona Pavilion share space with stark photographs of water towers by Bernd and Hilla Becher and rusted cold-rolled steel models by the late German architect Simon Ungers (below). Through July 7. sfmoma.org



→ BOOK

Philip Johnson on his Mies-designed apartment in New York: "Lilly Reich—let's say it—did all the work." On Christopher Isherwood in prewar Berlin: "We were picking up the same boys." On Phyllis Lambert's role in the design of the Seagram Building: "It wasn't that she knew anything about buildings ... " Those two master gossips, Robert A.M. Stern and Philip Johnson, recorded 10 of their conversations in 1985, agreeing that the tapes would sit idle until after Johnson's death. Now, they're transcribed and organized in a juicy new book, **The Philip Johnson Tapes: Interviews by Robert A.M. Stern.** \$40; The Monacelli Press

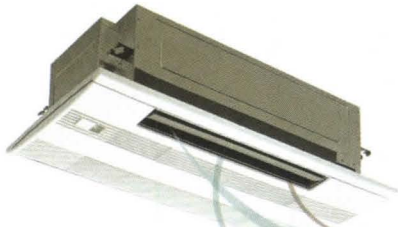
→ EXHIBIT

Long before Hello Kitty made her appearance on everything from backpacks to cookware, the craft of Japanese tea service—known as *chanoyu*—encompassed teacups, related utensils, clothing, paper screens (right), and tearooms themselves. **Yale University Art Gallery** traces the evolution of *chanoyu* from its antecedents in the ninth century to the present day. Through April 26. artgallery.yale.edu

• HANNAH MCCANN



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The Bard of Muswell Hill

THE KINKS' RAY DAVIES BROUGHT A LOVE OF TRADITIONAL ENGLISH PLACES TO '60S ROCK AND ROLL.



"L-o-l-a" spells preservation. Ray Davies of the Kinks (foreground) used his music to oppose rapacious development in postwar Britain.

TEXT BY AMANDA KOLSON HURLEY



Amanda Kolson Hurley is a senior editor at ARCHITECT. She has written for publications including *Preservation*, the Baltimore magazine *Urbanite*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. She lives outside Washington, D.C.

ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC, the Kinks are best known for their 1970 song "Lola," about a young man's encounter with a transvestite, and for the raw power chords of two hits from 1964: "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night." But between those milestones in the band's long career (the Kinks formed in 1963 and only officially split up in 1996), they recorded their quiet masterpiece *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968). A musical departure for the band, this album was also the first chapter in what became a sustained commentary by the band's lead singer and songwriter, Ray Davies, on the built environment of postwar Britain.

The opening song is a manifesto, by turns serious and silly: "We are the Office Block Persecution Affinity / God save little shops, china cups, and virginity." The threatened vitality of England's traditional towns and villages became such a preoccupation for Davies that he eventually wrote a rock opera about it, *Preservation (Acts 1 and 2)*, released in 1973–74. The villain of that piece—not the band's finest outing, musically—is a predatory real estate developer.

Village Green reveals Davies as a great songwriter and a man who was, to quote Ezra Pound, "out of key

with his time": While things were swinging on London's Carnaby Street, Davies stuck around the north London suburb of Muswell Hill, where he'd grown up, to write songs about strawberry jam and Tudor houses. Not surprisingly, the album was a commercial flop. Its 1969 follow-up, *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)*, fared a little better. *Arthur* sketches the arc of 20th century British history through the story of its titular character, an everyman based on Davies' brother-in-law.

When listened to carefully, *Village Green* and *Arthur* prove that Davies' surface nostalgia is really something deeper—it's a conviction that beloved places, and the memories they hold, must be sheltered from the sweep of conformity; and it's an indictment of the British class system that literally puts people in their place.

The most subtle of Davies' meditations on place and class is "Shangri-La," from *Arthur*. Even the song's title is ironic: The British tradition of giving one's house a name often results in a comical gap between grandiose pretensions (Shangri-la is a fictional paradise) and prosaic environs. What makes the song so effective is its ambivalence about suburbia—how pitiful, it suggests, that the sum of anyone's ambition is to take out a

mortgage on a bland suburban box. Yet in the eyes of Davies' working-class hero, a modest house with an indoor toilet really is paradise:

*Here's your reward for working so hard
Gone are the lavatories in the back yard
Gone are the days when you dreamed of that car
You just want to sit in your Shangri-la*

*Put on your slippers and sit by the fire
You've reached your top and you just can't get any higher
You're in your place and you know where you are
In your Shangri-la*

"You're in your place and you know where you are": At the same time that it undercuts Arthur's contentment, the lyric also affirms it. Perhaps Davies' fondness for the real-life Arthur—whom he regarded as a good but frustrated man—and his own working-class, suburban upbringing made him able to identify with those who moved to the suburbs for a better life. In any case, such generosity is notably absent from a better-known musical put-down of suburbia, Malvina Reynolds' 1963 song "Little Boxes" (once described by Tom Lehrer as "the most sanctimonious song ever written").

Davies sharpened his tone in response to urban

renewal. The album *Muswell Hillbillies* (1971) marries bluesy rock to lyrics that attack government-imposed conformity in the shape of eminent domain and modernization schemes. "Muswell Hillbilly" is the lament of a local man being forcibly moved to a new housing estate: "They can clear the slums as part of their solution / But they're never going to kill my Cockney pride." "Here Come the People in Grey" imagines the moment the same man (or one of his neighbors) receives the bad news:

*I got a letter this morning with some serious news
that's gone and ruined my day
The borough surveyor's used compulsory purchase
to acquire my domain ...
Here come the people in grey, they're gonna take me
away to Lord only knows where*

Did the people in gray win? Muswell Hill is now one of the more desirable neighborhoods in London (it can hardly be considered a suburb, given London's outward growth over the past 40 years). Houses like the one Davies bought for a mere 9,000 pounds (about \$14,000) can command more than a million today. Maybe one type of conformity—that of granite countertops and closets stuffed with designer suits, some in gray, no doubt—has simply replaced another. □

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TEXT BY BRAULIO AGNESE
PHOTO BY STEFAN HESTER

John Gilmore, who runs Life at HOK from the firm's St. Louis office and is a senior writer in the corporate communications group, gives all credit for the blog's popularity to the contributors: "They've run with it and are showing the world who they are, which is what we wanted them to do."

THE BLOG LIFE AT HOK is important not so much for what it offers—tales from the HOK cubicle as well as snark-free design-related postings, travelogue, commentary, videos, and ephemera—as for what it represents: a blue-chip firm, the kind of outfit one would expect to tightly control all external communication, allowing more than two dozen of its younger staff to express themselves on company time. (Most of the contributors, located around the globe, are under 35.) There is a “manifesto” and style guide, of course. But otherwise, says John Gilmore, senior writer in HOK's corporate communications group and the blog's manager, “it's all organic.”

It also, says media relations manager Mike Plotnick, lets HOK showcase talent beneath the senior design principal level, something many firms struggle with. And by providing up-and-comers with “a forum for getting noticed and playing in the game,” says Plotnick, HOK expects the blog will help recruit young and midcareer architects.

How far things have come since the web's early days. Back then, says Gilmore, “there was nervousness about putting names or e-mails on the website,” because top brass worried the best employees might be poached. These days, HOK's leadership is more savvy. When the idea for the blog, which launched in October, was presented at the firm's executive committee meeting, notes Gilmore, “our chairman and president stood up and applauded. Now, the approach is: This is a great place to work, and so we'll let our competition know we have these great people.”

In the end, Life at HOK is one of many ways the firm—which also maintains a presence on Facebook, Flickr, Delicious, and YouTube—is embracing a generation that, as Plotnick says, has never known life without the Internet. “We can't ignore that fact, because it's only going to grow in importance,” says Plotnick. “We see this as the future of corporate communication.” □

LINKS

paul-rand.com

Pretty much everything you wanted to know about the giant of 20th century graphic design.

lasvegasweekly.com/news/2009/feb/19/making-designs-vegas

The *Las Vegas Weekly* sits four local architects down for a conversation about the recession, CityCenter, and future development in Sin City.

borderwallarchitecture.blogspot.com

The U.S.–Mexico border wall currently under construction is a flashpoint for the design and activist community. Follow the wall's development, read news and commentary, and see proposals, installations, and videos about the 700-mile-long, \$1.2 billion project.

architecturaldigest.com/homes/features/2009/03/john_updike

To celebrate the late, great American writer John Updike, *Architectural Digest* has collected four essays he penned for the magazine. From “Fictional Houses” (January 1985): “I have great trouble, myself, in imagining the floor plans of split-level homes, though I feel they are important sites of the American condition.”

architectsbirdfeeder.com

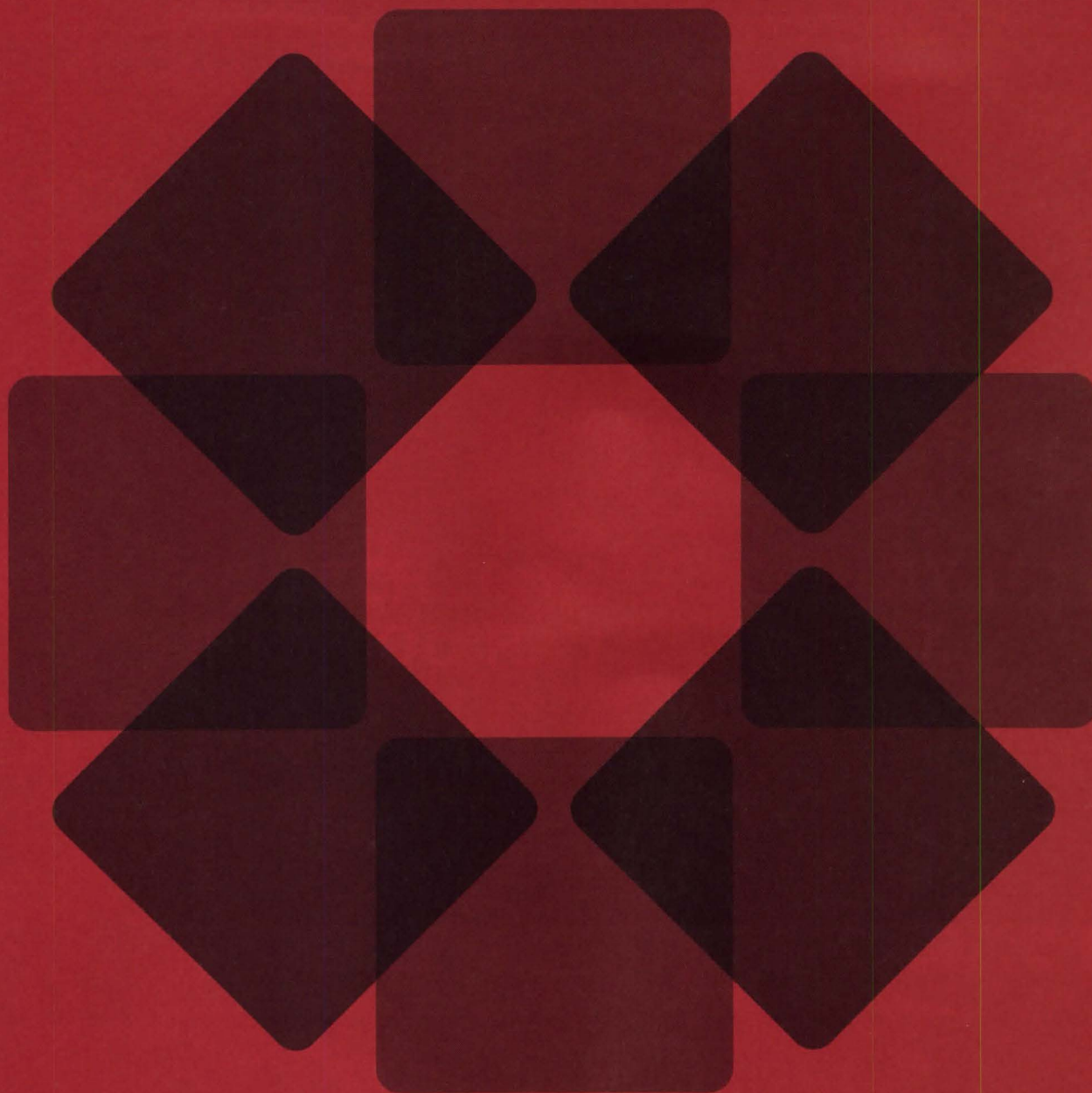
Think those nuthatches and sparrows outside your window might be modernists at heart? Offer them a stylish dining roost that would make Corbu proud.

ballardian.com/the-real-concrete-island

Over at Ballardian.com, a site devoted to the work of dystopic British novelist J.G. Ballard (a favorite among a certain breed of architect), regular contributor Mike Bonsall does a little sleuthing and makes the case that *Concrete Island* (1973) is based on a sliver of land beneath London's Westway, a section of the A40 highway.

todaysfacilitymanager.com/facilityblog/labels/fm_alert

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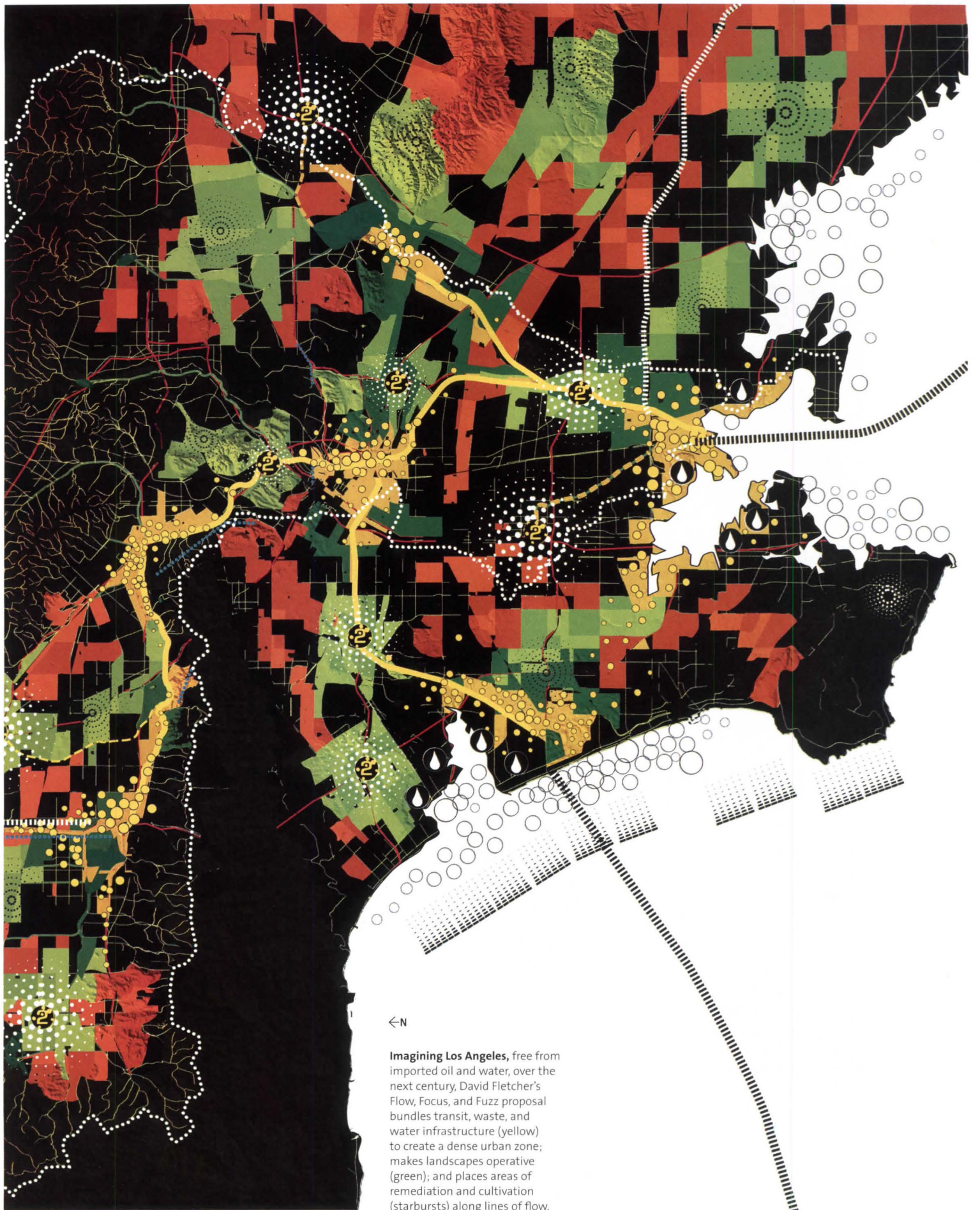
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TEXT BY MIMI ZEIGER

URBAN

RENEWAL

WHAT KIND OF URBANISM WILL PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STIMULUS BILLIONS BUY? FOR AN EMERGING GENERATION OF ACTIVIST DESIGNERS, **THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN CITY** LIES NOT IN TOP-DOWN MASTER PLANS, BUT IN A FINE-GRAINED ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING FABRIC.



←N

Imagining Los Angeles, free from imported oil and water, over the next century, David Fletcher's Flow, Focus, and Fuzz proposal bundles transit, waste, and water infrastructure (yellow) to create a dense urban zone; makes landscapes operative (green); and places areas of remediation and cultivation (starbursts) along lines of flow.

profile →

Fletcher Studio

San Francisco • fletcherstudio.com



HARVESTING THE POWER OF LANDSCAPE TO SHAPE CITIES.

Landscape architect David Fletcher's work operates across scales—from the micro, such as a residential biopool that creates a small habitat in a Zurich backyard, to the macro, such as the project Making the Connections, an ambitious scheme for alternative transportation planning in downtown Los Angeles. "All the projects have a really strong desire to create a mashup of urban ecology and people," he explains. "My work has been associated with landscape urbanism, so I am very much interested in process, in time, and in an ethical commitment to design." For Fletcher, who teaches in the architecture departments at the Southern California Institute of Architecture in Los Angeles and at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, sustainable design is less about the morals of environmentalism than it is about not wasting the opportunities that buildings and sitework create.

In the case of Making the Connections (above), this means reworking the streets in Los Angeles' Lincoln/Cypress and Ann Street neighborhoods to encourage walking and biking to nearby Metro Gold Line stations. (The red lines and dashes denote a proposed bicycle network.) The plan ties into housing development spurred by the new transit hub, a revitalization plan for the Los Angeles River, and the Los Angeles State Historic Park. By paying attention to details like street trees, green medians, and sidewalk plantings, Fletcher is able to control urban ecology issues such as how stormwater percolates back into the watershed.

ON FEB. 19, PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA signed an order establishing the White House Office of Urban Affairs. First announced just days after the historic U.S. election last November, the office—which will be headed by Bronx Borough president Adolfo Carrión Jr., who has a master's in urban planning and spent three years in the New York City Department of City Planning—will serve as a bridge between federal dollars and the programs that affect metropolitan America. Among other pursuits, its mandate covers community development, housing, job creation, manufacturing innovation, sustainable technologies, and infrastructure.

This commitment to cities is just as surprising (and overdue) in breadth and vision as it is unsurprising, given our new president's urban history—many have cited Obama's time as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago—and knowledge. Stumping in Toledo, Ohio, last August, Obama was handed a copy of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by an audience member. The exchange sparked the candidate to give a nuanced explanation of the relationship between cities and suburbs.

"The research has shown that if you want a thriving suburban area, then you better have a thriving city. If you want a state as a whole to do well, then the metropolitan areas in that state have to do well," Obama said. "There is no separation. It is all linked together. We have to get past this notion that we can just leave the cities to rot, because your economy will rot. We want to work to revitalize cities, to diversify their economy."

The new administration's emphasis on urbanism, combined with unprecedented infrastructure spending and the appointment of a "green dream team" to tackle climate change issues, has raised hopes for architects and urban designers. "The stimulus package could be really exciting, and everyone has something riding on it, and some of us around here are feeling that we are at a tipping point to connecting our urban policies to some trends we've been seeing—to more compact development, focus on the center, quality of life, and sustainability," says Philip Myrick, vice president of the New York-based nonprofit Project for Public Spaces.

But Myrick's optimism is cautious. In the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into law on Feb. 17, total infrastructure accounts for just a fraction, with \$47 billion going to a combination of transit, rail, roads, and bridges. Highway investments dominate the allotment. Is this the way to jump-start cities? "We need to put a more efficient, less sprawling, less car-dependent infrastructure on the table, but I really don't see it in the package," Myrick warns. "My fear is that rather than changing the way we live in a profound way, which is what we need to do, that we will wind up replacing one technology with another, that we will still live in this land-gobbling way."

Myrick stresses a commitment to "soft infrastructure," the social spots where we live and work: parks, downtowns, public spaces. "These places are vital to our public health and to the success of cities," he explains. "It's what makes them sustainable and what makes them better. There is very little awareness that creating those vital

spaces in the public realm is a critical bottom line of any stimulus package.”

WITH THE OFFICE OF URBAN AFFAIRS and the stimulus package, the new administration is sending a mixed message: Yes, we are committed to re-envisioning cities, and yes, transportation and infrastructure remain status quo. This leads to questions: What model will the next urbanism take? And who will design it?

New Urbanism — with its feel-good values — was the go-to philosophy for rebuilding New Orleans, and results have yet to rise out of the muck. Still, **the Congress for the New Urbanism succeeds because it has established initiatives and resources that are easily digested by lawmakers.** “The avant-garde hasn’t really offered up anything comparable or as comprehensive,” says Peter Zellner. “Who else has written plans, policies, and prescriptions that can be implemented by politicians?”

Zellner coordinates the Southern California Institute for Future Initiatives (SCIFI) program at the Southern California Institute of Architecture. The research-based graduate program is co-sponsoring (with *The Architect’s Newspaper*) an open ideas competition titled “A New Infrastructure: Innovative Transit Solutions for Los Angeles.” SCIFI’s mission is to train graduate students not just in design, but in policy and planning—the very tools needed to rebuild and reframe the city from an economic, social, and environmental perspective.

Looking at the infrastructure of Los Angeles, a car city if there ever was one, means understanding that highway-driven sprawl is no longer feasible. The metropolis, having filled the L.A. basin to the point of overflow, has begun to turn back in on itself. **The subprime mortgage bust reminds us that cities just can’t support ever-more-attenuated subdivisions and strip malls.** New Urbanist literature recognizes the need to redevelop urban cores, replacing them with walkable streets and transit hubs. And while the practice is laudable, it makes use of an urban language drawn from a cultural imagination of Main Street as seen in film and television—a unified, comfortable vision that is hard to argue against. “Based on the neotraditionalism that it is peddling and the fact that it works best on green-field sites, the paradigm New Urbanism promotes is actually, ironically, anti-city,” maintains Santa Monica-based architect and urban planner Roger Sherman.

Sherman co-directs cityLAB, an urban design think tank founded in 2006 and supported by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It takes on projects theoretical, political, and pragmatic, but always advancing new approaches to the urban realm. “The alternative [to New Urbanism] is not a new overall blanket ideology or theory,” explains cityLAB director Dana Cuff, a professor of architecture, urban design, and urban planning at UCLA. “It is the idea of working in existing cities, not on master plans. You have to have tactics and strategies.”

For Cuff and Sherman, top-down master plans are problematic. Just as the word “urban” takes on pejorative, inner-city connotations, “master planning” is tainted with the notion of outside forces acting on existing communities. This is not to say that cityLAB avoids large-scale projects, but its members understand the finer grain. With the

profile →

cityLAB

Los Angeles • citylab.aud.ucla.edu



THE CULTURE AND POLITICS OF URBAN SPACE.

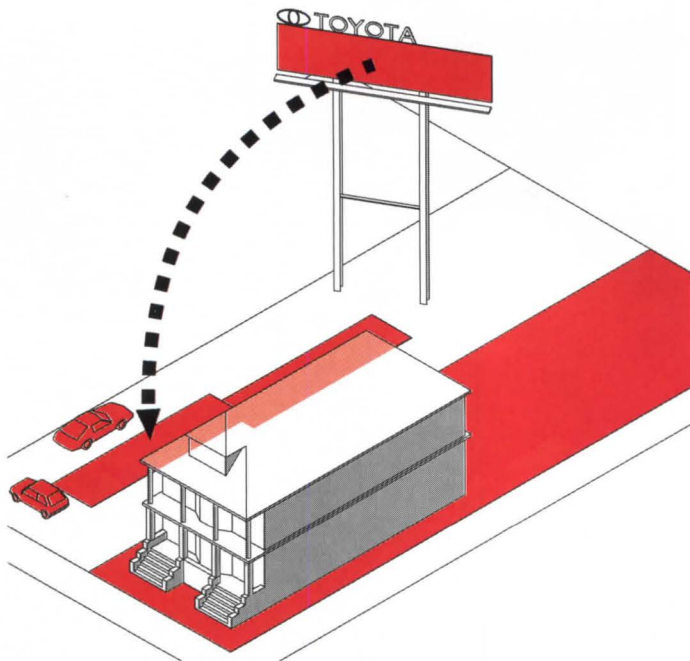
Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman founded cityLAB in 2006, with the support of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Cuff is a professor in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design and the School of Public Affairs' Department Urban Planning at UCLA, and Sherman heads his own architecture and urban design practice in Santa Monica. The think tank brings together architects, planners, and graduate researchers at UCLA to tackle the challenges facing the modern city. “How do you make it a better place without a utopian vision?” asks Cuff. The question is at the root of cityLAB’s research. The collective looks at what is happening in Los Angeles neighborhoods and offers strategies to make a better city: zoning changes, housing solutions, or technological interventions. (Cuff’s recent writing looks at tools, such as GPS and cell phones, that bring pervasive computing to urban space.)

CityLAB’s efforts extend beyond the L.A. basin. In a recent project developed for the Flip a Strip design competition, the group transformed a Phoenix strip mall into an agricultural mecca (above). As a critique of an Arizona landscape consumed by sprawl, the renewed mall—one of many that would dot the landscape—sprouts lettuces, vegetables, and algae alongside cars and shoppers. Look for a book to come out of the cityLAB headquarters soon: Based on a 2007 symposium that brought together some of the academy’s top thinkers, *Fast Forward: Toward a Design and Politics for Metroburia* theorizes ongoing changes in places like Los Angeles; Biloxi, Miss.; and Lower Manhattan.

profile →

Interboro Partners

Brooklyn, N.Y. • interboropartners.net



RESEARCH. DOCUMENT. ANALYZE. REPEAT.

Interboro partners Tobias Armbrorst, Daniel D'Oca, and Georreen Theodore met as students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, where they found themselves slipping between disciplines. They wanted to unite architecture and planning, using the creativity of the former to loosen up the data-heavy world of the latter. The trio won its first honor in 2003 with the Dead Malls Competition. Their proposal envisioned an intermediary life for a mall in Fishkill, N.Y., as it awaited redevelopment, putting in place the tools Interboro continues to utilize. The team researched, visited, and photographed the mall intensively, finding that it was not dead, but rather a place of ongoing activities, both formal (a postal distribution center) and informal (a flea market). Interboro's proposal arose from what was actually happening. "Our analysis stems from our love of the built environment and our love of how space functions," says Theodore.

With the Improve Your Lot! project (above), begun in 2004 as a winning entry in collaboration with the Center for Urban Pedagogy in the Shrinking Cities competition, Interboro and the center studied empty residential lots in Detroit and the homeowners who not only remained but spread out and occupied abandoned adjacent lots. The firm documented the practice, seeing it as positive. (In this instance, a homeowner maintains a garden on the neighboring lot, which is owned by a billboard company, and uses discarded signs as ground cover for her plants.) As advocates, Armbrorst, D'Oca, and Theodore continue to educate the Detroit community on ways of achieving landownership.

project 10K Pacoima: Backyard Homes, cityLAB researchers worked with a diverse project team of community organizers, L.A. planning department staff, city council members, and for-profit and nonprofit developers to identify sites for affordable housing in the northeast San Fernando Valley, an area facing shortages. Closely reading the urban fabric, the team located more than a thousand super-sized single-family lots (topping 10,000 square feet). By collaborating with the community and working with existing planning policy and zoning practices, they found that the empty spaces on those lots could not only accommodate workforce infill housing in the residential neighborhoods, but in turn increase overall density—a factor that also increases the sustainability of the area and, because public infrastructure is already in place, reduces valley sprawl. Development of design criteria and financing for the pilot project are under way.

BECAUSE CITYLAB IS BASED IN LOS ANGELES, its work inevitably deals with the blurring of core urban and suburban issues—the kind of relationships mentioned in Obama's stump speech. Terminology such as "megalopolis" and "exurban" has trickled down from the academy and into mainstream parlance to describe a condition Sherman likes to call "metrourban." It is a condition prevalent in the States, but insufficiently addressed. **Redefining the urban in urbanism—looking beyond the polarizing distinctions between urb and suburb—is critical to practitioners on both coasts.**

Brooklyn, N.Y.-based Interboro Partners—Tobias Armbrorst, Daniel D'Oca, and Georreen Theodore—is curating the 2009 International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam. The title of the exhibition, "Community and the Open City," speaks to the goal of a heterogeneous American city, both in terms of diversity in urban design and planning, but also, and perhaps just as important, socially and ethnically. What is a city, if not a mix of people and activities?

Interboro has won a series of notable competitions since it was founded in 2002, including the Columbus [Ohio] Re-Wired ideas competition in 2007. Its winning project, The Critical Path, rejected the competition brief's desire to link up the city center nodes with the suburbs because, according to Theodore, it reinforced old-school thinking about cities, pitching downtown against sprawl. Instead, Interboro proposed transportation infrastructure for an everyday corridor in a Columbus inner-ring suburb—a site full of the banes of urban design: big box stores, cul-de-sacs, and golf courses.

Trying to get riders that critical last quarter mile from a transportation hub to their homes, the team asked unusual questions, such as: How to make a shopping center denser? The firm is emerging as a fresh voice precisely because its members are so attentive to what is really going on in American cities today, not an idealized or dystopic version of it. **"To change the planning discourse, we want to get planners to look a little more closely at the urban dynamics of a space,"** says D'Oca. **"The way analysis is done needs to change,** so it is not just based on the quick visual clues but is a more thorough engagement with the space and how it works, despite what you might initially think."

IN ITS UNDERSTANDING of how a site works—really works—and how it affects its users, much of the new thinking about urban design is underpinned by infrastructural systems and the environment. It is an approach that seems localized, but the implications of this rethink can be applied nationally, especially in regard to environmental concerns. San Francisco-based landscape architect **David Fletcher brushes aside status quo terms such as “green” and “sustainable” in favor of “urban ecology.” The phrase isn’t metaphorical.**

In Fletcher’s work on the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (undertaken while at Mia Lehrer’s office), a restoration of the city’s oft-chided concrete channel, he doesn’t separate the river from architecture and urban development. Urban watershed, river, storm-drain runoff, new construction—all are linked like a natural ecosystem. The river could be the catalyst for alternative transportation and denser development throughout the region, but **it requires a systematic, metabolic approach, not a superficial greenwash.** The Revitalization Master Plan team—which included the Department of Public Works’ Bureau of Engineering, consultant Tetra Tech, and a host of professionals in urban design and planning, landscape architecture, economic development, environmental analysis, and community outreach—worked for nearly two years to develop the guiding principles and objectives now in place.

Mitchell Joachim, a co-founder of Brooklyn’s Terreform ONE (Open Network Ecology), echoes Fletcher’s desire to go beyond simply efficient or sustainable urban solutions. **The nonprofit practice creates visionary proposals, propagandalike in their scope and activist intent.** Rapid Re(f)use: Waste to Resource City 2120 is a *Wall-E*-esque plan to rebuild New York City from scratch using millions of tons of trash from the Fresh Kills Landfill. And like the Disney flick, it features robots (here outfitted with 3-D printers) that would sort, process, and reconstitute the junk into new construction material. CityLAB’s and Interboro’s work falls under “Radical Incrementalism”—a phrase coined by Sherman and Cuff—but Terreform 1’s projects are meant to be provocative on a large scale, a polar extreme from the other practices.

Whether fantasy or audacity, Joachim’s work has gotten attention. In September, *Wired* magazine named him one of 15 people Obama should listen to. But **the new administration should hear all emergent urbanists.** CityLAB, Interboro, Fletcher Studio, and Terreform 1 are all activists in their own right, and they are just four of many practices engaging with the city in significant ways. That it takes a crisis to recognize the problem only stresses the importance of radical thinking. “For the first time in a long time, these thinkers might be taken seriously,” stresses SCIFI’s Zellner. “It’s the time where there is the political wherewithal to make changes. Speculation is not just a device for intellectual diversion. It might now actually be useful. It might improve and forestall crises—ecological and economic.” New policy and infrastructure spending (even in light of its inner conflict) present an opportunity to strategically change and revitalize American cities.

“Urban design is not dead. It has not had a chance to be reborn,” says Joachim, parrying a 2005 claim by theorist and architect Michael Sorkin. Here’s that chance. □

profile →

Terreform ONE (Open Network Ecology)

Brooklyn, N.Y. • terreform.org



DREAMS TO PROVOKE REALITIES.

Mitchell Joachim and Maria Aiolova founded the Brooklyn, N.Y.-based nonprofit Terreform 1 on the premise of bringing together science and the built environment, ecology and urbanism. “We have a new model: the socioecological condition. It’s part cultural, part science, half and half,” says Joachim. “It is a great way to think about solving the problems that man has created.” The scope of a Terreform 1 project is often as big as the man-made problem at hand. For instance, the proposal New York 2106: Self Sufficient City (above), which won the History Channel’s 2006 City of the Future competition, asks that the city go far beyond efficiency, actually producing all of its own necessities, from food and energy to housing and waste processing. Additionally, it transforms Manhattan by turning half of the vehicular roadways over to pedestrian traffic and abundant green space.

To provoke discussion about the environment, Terreform 1 produces concepts like the Fab Tree Hab, a literally living house, grown on site and shaped by reusable, CNC-milled scaffolding. Joachim stresses that collaboration between architects, engineers, scientists, and urban planners is essential. “When you think of massive issues like the city, [nothing comes] from any one field—especially urban design,” he notes. To this end, he’s formed the Bioworks Institute with biologist Oliver Medvedik. The pair is experimenting with biotechnology and tissue culturing to grow a “meat house.” No plans have been announced for a meat city, yet.



FAIR PLAY

A bowling trophy in the offices of Ross Barney Architects received a feminist makeover.

TEXT BY HANNAH MCCANN
PHOTOS BY JASON FULFORD

LOTS OF FIRMS TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY, BUT **WHAT MAKES AN OFFICE TRULY INCLUSIVE?** A NEW STUDY OFFERS SOME ANSWERS. →

URBANWORKS, A 13-PERSON, woman- and minority-owned design firm founded in Chicago in 1993, has seen its best earnings yet in the past two years, and principal Patricia Saldaña Natke credits the gain to a contented office. “It shows to clients if your employees are happy,” she says. “If they’re not happy, they project that in meetings, and then it trickles back to me. For us, it’s all about the people working.”

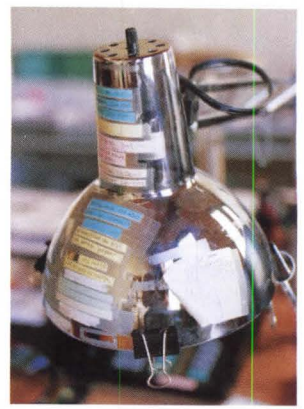
UrbanWorks and three other Chicago-area architecture firms—Hutter Architects, Ross Barney Architects, and Primera—were examined last year as part of a study, “Diversity in Architecture Firms: Finding a Work/Life Balance.” Karen Rust, a second-year master’s candidate in the architecture program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wanted to see what these firms were doing right (and wrong) to foster an inclusive, woman- and minority-friendly working environment. As part of her research, she interviewed firm employees and talked to focus groups composed of members of the nonprofit Chicago Women in Architecture. Rust’s study was guided by Professor Kathryn Anthony, author of the 2001 book *Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession*.

Rust’s findings identify changes in an office’s physical environs that can substantially improve the comfort level of all employees, but especially female employees. Put in architects’ language, these are simple programmatic requirements: safe and accessible siting; open space; designated nursing areas; and remote access. Rust’s study is small and her findings are localized to Chicago, but she’s pointing to something big—a changing office landscape that welcomes a diverse workforce. In this economy, success depends as much on how well you work as it does on how much you work.

STAFF KITCHEN—URBANWORKS



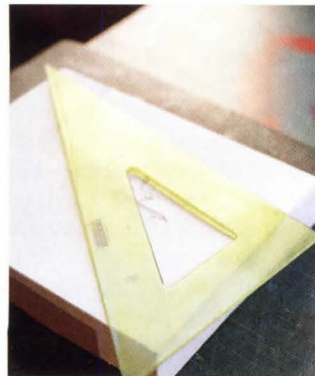
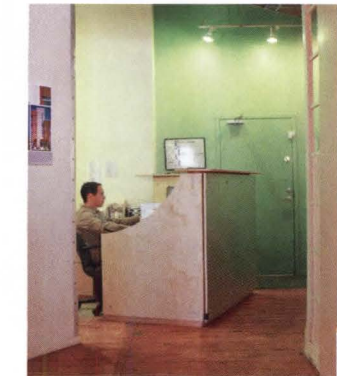
CAROL ROSS BARNEY



DOORLESS OFFICE—URBANWORKS



URBANWORKS MEETING



PRIVATE ROOM—PRIMERA



SAFE, ACCESSIBLE SITING

Rust cites studies that show working parents add an average of 28 minutes to their daily commute to drop off and/or pick up a child at day care. New firms often look to less expensive up-and-coming neighborhoods for office space, but an out-of-the-way location might deter a large swath of potential employees—parents of young children and also those dependent on public transit (read: young, green)—from working there.



Safety is a major concern. Women in Rust's study reported that they feel safer in buildings with a secure entry. Proximate transit and designated parking areas are also desirable for female job seekers and employees. Firms can make employees feel safer by offering to pay cab fare on late nights.

OPEN SPACE

In her visits to Chicago-area firms, Rust found that an open floor plan encourages collaboration. A lunchroom gets people talking. Doorless offices loosen a traditional sense of hierarchy, which may be alienating to younger and female employees. Just a few weeks after joining UrbanWorks, designer Melissa Mazariegos brainstormed with her colleagues who share the same open office. "There have been times when I start thinking out loud, and my co-workers will build on the ideas, and then all of a sudden we will be drawing and developing a more coherent idea."

In founding UrbanWorks, Natke wanted to duplicate the experience she had working at Ross Barney

Architects, where she learned the ropes by listening to principal Carol Ross Barney talking to clients. Now, in her own firm, "everything is transparent," Natke says, including the sliding walls of the conference room. Thursday's "Look-Ahead" meeting is attended by the entire staff (one employee comes in with her infant twins and nurses them during the meeting). Natke adds, "I even tell them what we're going after. It's how the culture is here. Frankly, I have nothing to hide."

Noise is the downside of an open office, but chatter seems to be going out of style. In the past year or so, Ross Barney has noticed a hush descending over her office, a three-level space centering on an open atrium that was designed by the late Harry Weese. Most communication—even interoffice—is via e-mail. Employees take personal calls outside on cell phones.

DESIGNATED NURSING/PRIVATE AREAS

Federal law allows parents up to three months of leave after having a baby, but the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers exclusively nurse their infants until at least six months of age. Women wanting to do right by both their employer and their baby may become well acquainted with a breast pump, but finding a place to use it is problematic.

Women in Rust's focus groups described sitting on restroom toilets—not just uncomfortable, but far from ideal in sanitary terms. One mother in Rust's study described working in an office with only one bathroom and having to forewarn other employees that she needed to use the restroom for an extended period of time. Similarly, women in Rust's study who used conference rooms to pump described the awkwardness of coordinating nursing time with meeting schedules. At Ross Barney, nursing mothers can use a computer server room, private but chilly.

Primera, an engineering and architecture firm, offers a forward-thinking solution in their 100-person office: quiet rooms, furnished with a comfortable chair, which can be used by anyone who needs a private place to nurse, pray, or otherwise retreat from the activity of the office.

REMOTE ACCESS

Gone are the days of the 9 to 5 schedule, if those days ever really existed. In the firms Rust examined, core hours—usually around 10 to 4—ensure that everyone is on hand for key hours of the day but allow flexibility to care for children, teach—or in the case of one architect at Ross Barney, perform ballet. Employees can make up the difference by coming in earlier, staying later, or, with laptops or remote access, logging in from home.

UrbanWorks is experimenting with flexible work-at-home options. Natke herself works from home on Mondays to spend more time with her daughters. Maria Pellot, a project architect at the firm, works six hours a day from home, fitting in the time when her twin babies sleep. It makes sense for UrbanWorks because Pellot is a valued project architect; it makes sense for Pellot because, while the demands of infant twins are high, "I want to keep working. If you stop working, you become obsolete." □

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Recession Survival: Part 2

TEXT BY BRADFORD MCKEE

WE'RE ALL HURTING IN THIS ECONOMY—BUT IF YOU'RE A FIRM LEADER, YOU DON'T WANT YOUR STAFF AND YOUR BALANCE SHEET TO TAKE TOO MUCH OF A POUNDING.

FIRST OF ALL, it's not just your firm. As if you didn't know.

Recession problems are common problems—until they happen to you. A lot of firm principals today are young enough never to have experienced a deep, long downturn. (Many of their older colleagues have been there, and reserve a special chill for recalling the early '90s.) So a lot of principals know what to do because they've heard the standard advice: Trim expenses (including, sadly, staff); conserve cash; and so on.

The problem is, firm leaders don't always know *when* to do those things. Even if cutting back looks inevitable, some don't have the stomach for it or handle it badly.

The leaders who live to tell are those who confront their problems head-on. (The number of unemployed architects at the moment would suggest that many principals have done just that, for better and worse.) And though layoffs are grim enough, there are also clients to deal with—clients who may be months behind in paying you. There are also, believe it or not, a few clients out there

who will still hire you, but you have to weigh carefully which jobs are worth chasing and which are a waste of your time and money.

Competition has gotten much tighter. Architects in smaller firms are shocked to see big firms' names on shortlists for things like tedious routine maintenance contracts—contracts that were the smaller firms' exclusive domain in better days. Check out the 100 firms that showed up at the preproposal meeting for a modest library renovation for the city of Malibu, a response the city's project manager calls unprecedented. And do you know how far below the bone some of your colleagues are cutting their fees, simply because cashing checks, of any size, feels good? (Not that there are a lot of checks flying around, period.)

Things are clearly dire. Besides waiting on an exceptionally bold client to come forward or for stimulus money to flow your way, what are you supposed to do?

As most architects have recognized by now, things

are unlikely to return to normal soon. And though the problems are the same among most offices, some principals have found sensible rather than sheepish ways to try to handle what's ahead. We talked to a number of them around the country and compiled some of the best advice we found.

THE KINDEST CUT

Laying off staff is hard, which is why some firm leaders procrastinate about doing it. "I'd like to think we did it at about the right time," says one principal. "Some people, especially architects, hesitate to make those hard decisions because they affect all our lives."

But the process doesn't need to lack dignity. Bob Clark, the president of Baskervill, an architecture and engineering firm

laid-off employees to use if there is any work they need to retrieve for job hunting.

A similar scenario played out at Denver's Shears-Adkins, now a 10-person office after letting four people go in October. "In a smaller office, everybody knows what's going on" in terms of clients and projects, says Chris Shears, a principal. "It was obvious that we weren't really going to be able to keep them busy." The firm didn't offer severance, but helped with résumés and references, and even managed to find a job for one person.

The office, Shears adds, remains open to former employees for whatever they need—and the offer has been made as well to people laid off by clients' companies. "Our phone and copier are theirs. They can come in and bring their laptop, and do whatever they need to do," says Shears. "They look at us and say, 'Really?' But we're all in this struggle together."

Roy H. Higgs is the CEO of Development Design Group (DDG) in Baltimore, a firm that was doing fine until last fall: "Suddenly, at the end of September, early October, it was as if someone turned the lights out," he remembers. "We ran right into a wall with cash flow. Everybody stopped paying." Several of DDG's projects in the U.S. were canceled.

Among the approximately 30 people (out of about 110) whom DDG recently had to lay off were a number of foreign nationals reliant on work visas. "We helped them with legal fees and problems if they decided to stay," Higgs says. "But some of them came back and said, 'We can't find a job.' So we paid for their return [plane] fares. We helped them every way we could."

Many principals are torn by the possibility that work could pick up again just after they've let go of staff members in whom they've invested deeply. And it's expensive to hire all over again. "The reality is that it can cost \$100,000 to recruit someone," says Marjanne Pearson, an architectural recruiting consultant in Petaluma, Calif. "When you figure the time it takes and the investment that person takes—and getting them oriented—there's a real trade-off between letting someone go ... versus keeping them and getting some productivity in a way that is of value to the firm."

About that productivity: A lot of firms are now house-keeping, taking care of things they had no time for when business was brisk, such as getting LEED accredited, beefing up detail libraries, expanding their building information modeling (BIM) capacity, and improving their web presence. In the last recession, Clark notes, Baskervill's principals took time to revise the firm's hiring and employment policies. A smart thing to do, but it turned out to have a downside: "We didn't have any dead weight when this recession hit," Clark says. "All the folks we let go were really good folks, so that part stunk."

It's not just out of charity that Clark and his colleagues try to make the layoff process as gentle as possible. "One of those we let go might be our client next year. We do have a lot of Baskervill alumni who are clients," Clark says.

STOP THE BLEEDING

Alas, because there are numerous ways to bleed financially, reducing staff alone won't solve all your problems. Principals are looking harder at their habits around cash,

"EVERYONE GOT ON THE PHONE. FOLKS WHO NEVER DISCUSS MONETARY MATTERS WITH CLIENTS STARTED CHASING ACCOUNTS."

—ROY H. HIGGS, DEVELOPMENT DESIGN GROUP

in Richmond, Va., knows there are employers who give laid-off staff members a box and an hour to pack their belongings before showing them the door. There may be a security guard present. Locks may be changed. All because the boss heard somewhere that that's how you do it. Clark figured that there must be far less creepy ways to handle layoffs.

Baskervill had to cut 10 percent of its staff before Thanksgiving, a move Clark calls "somewhat proactive" based on the principals' forecasts. "We had to protect Baskervill at all costs and keep it profitable," he says, pointing out that anything else would be a disservice to those who remain.

The firm gave departing employees severance pay, and "more than normally required," Clark says. Once they made the announcements, the principals brought in a leadership consultant to hold a daylong seminar in résumé writing and interview preparation for the people leaving. Also, there was no hustling them out of the building. To the contrary, the firm keeps a desk open in the office for

credit, and collections—“conservative” would hardly be the word these days—and tying up every loose end.

Often those loose ends lead right back to clients. At Los Angeles-based Gruen Associates, Mike Enomoto, a partner, finds that clients generally pay about “98 percent of the time,” he says. But lately, an increasing number have fallen behind. “Our strategy is to stop working,” he says. “Not because we want to. We have to do that because I can’t continue to fund their projects.” Private-sector clients present the highest risk, he says. “The public work is drying up, but once we do the work, they do pay.”

You can have decent billings and a positive profit/loss statement, “but cash flow is something else,” says DDG’s Higgs. “One has to focus with a great deal more emphasis, with threats and concrete boots,” to bring in money owed, he says. “That’s what’s going to make or break you.”

October was one of DDG’s worst months for collections ever, but December became one of its best. “Everyone got on the phone,” says Higgs. “Folks who never discuss monetary matters with clients started chasing delinquent and not-delinquent accounts.” And at a time when some architects would rather shrink from their bankers, DDG’s principals called theirs regarding a line of credit they had not been using. “We said to them that we were looking at a rather tumultuous 2009, and that we might need to activate a line of credit,” Higgs says. “They said, ‘Great. We appreciate the heads-up.’”

Clark says that though Baskervill has a long relationship with its bank and an unsecured line of credit, the principals have reason to worry that the bank might merge or be bought out. So they tested the credit line. “In the middle of December, we borrowed \$100,000 and gave it right back the next day,” he says. “Just to make sure everything was OK.”

On the expense side, some principals are cutting pay across the board, shortening workweeks to four days in lieu of (or in addition to) layoffs, talking with landlords about more favorable leases or trying to sublet space, curtailing travel and entertainment to the essential, and trying to manage their own debts better.

Jonathan Barnes, principal of his eponymous firm in Columbus, Ohio, persuaded his bankers to give him a “much better deal” on the firm’s interest rate, whereupon he transferred an outstanding credit-line balance to a new loan. “We’ve been successful managing that credit, and it’s been useful,” he says.

STAY HEALTHY

A lot of clients are expecting lower fees these days. Have you noticed? And some firms are willing to accept them—they may even offer them.

But it’s a really bad idea, both for individual firms and for architecture as a profession. “The clients who select a firm based on lowest cost are the clients you don’t want,” insists Michael Strogoff, a consultant to design firms. “Those clients will cost you more.”

Nonetheless, to hear architects tell it, the practice is widespread. “Some of these guys are just buying these jobs,” says Dan Withee, principal and founding partner of Withee Malcolm Architects in Torrance, Calif. “They’re housing guys. They’re literally buying jobs at 50 percent

lower than everybody else. What do you do with that?”

One thing you do, if you can, is to remind clients to beware of such firms. “If you’re a client, you have to be afraid,” Withee says. “If you see a fee that’s too low, that [architect] may not be there to finish the thing.”

The surest way for architects to avoid the low-ball rodeo is to redouble marketing efforts. Some principals are hiring marketing staff, even as they lay off design and technical staff, to help rationalize their attempts to get their names out there.

“I hired a marketing person because I knew we were going to put out more RFPs and RFQs,” says Enomoto. He says Gruen Associates is targeting transportation projects in particular. “We looked at all parts of the public sector but moved toward transportation,” he says. “If any area was going to grow, that had to be it.”

As Enomoto suggests, you have to pick your targets with extreme care. “Competition is up threefold, fourfold, fivefold,” he says. With so many firms going after jobs in desperation, this is no time for birdshot, or to try crossing over heedlessly into a specialty in which you have little or no experience.

Architects are also watching their active clients carefully for signs of instability. Shears says that in the past six months, he’s had to pull his firm out of one project because he saw trouble ahead. “I didn’t feel their funding sources were adequate,” he says. “They were using equity for projects that wasn’t necessarily targeted. I walked out of a meeting one day and shook my head. I looked at the architect I was with and said, ‘We’re going to leave this project. We’re going to do it and do it diplomatically.’”

The client was upset, he says, but wound up halving its staff two weeks later. “You don’t always get the whole

“SOME OF THESE GUYS ARE JUST BUYING THESE JOBS. THEY’RE HOUSING GUYS. THEY’RE LITERALLY BUYING JOBS AT 50 PERCENT LOWER THAN EVERYBODY ELSE. WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THAT?”

—DAN WITHEE, WITHEE MALCOLM ARCHITECTS

truth,” Shears adds. “You get a little bit of it. People say they’re doing fine and they’re not.”

Shears is 61 years old. It takes his kind of experience to know when doing things the harder way is best. If anything good comes out of this recession, it is that that kind of wisdom is changing hands generationally. Baskervill principal Brent Farmer says he and his partners remember the past two recessions well, which has helped immensely. The firm’s first three quarters of 2008 were quite prosperous, and then this latest downturn began.

“We looked at each other and said, ‘Remember all those things we said we’d do if it happens again?’ We stuck to it. We sucked it up and did it.” □

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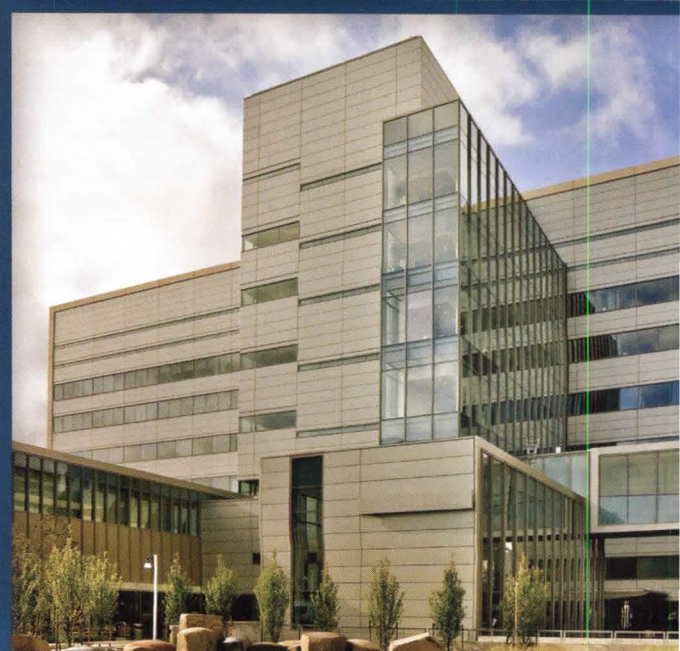
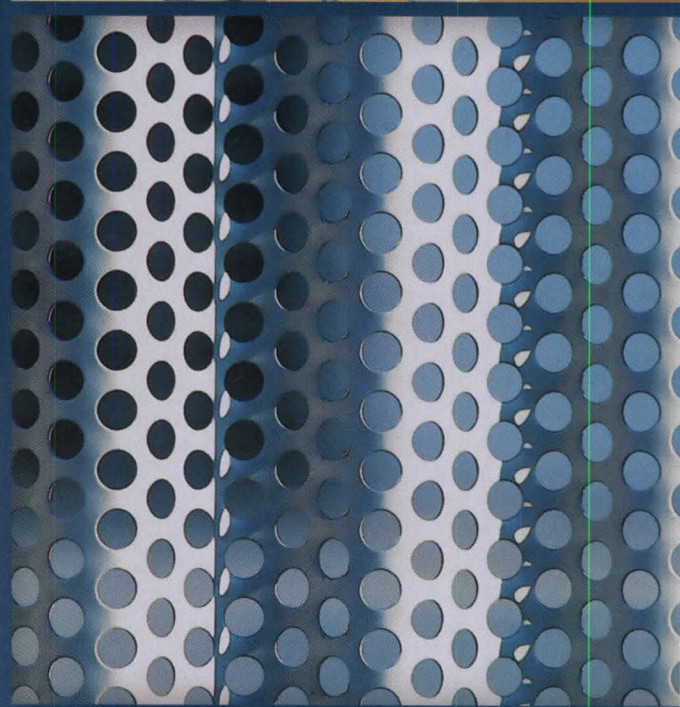


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TEXT BY VERNON MAYS
PHOTOS BY CÉSAR RUBIO

PORTOLA VALLEY TOWN CENTER

PORTOLA VALLEY, CALIF.
SIEGEL & STRAIN ARCHITECTS AND GORING & STRAJA ARCHITECTS

Three buildings—a town hall, a community hall, and a library—make up the new Portola Valley Town Center, a sustainable civic center for a small town south of San Francisco. Green measures include solar panels on the south-facing roof slopes of two of the buildings and a maintenance shed. Together they form a 76-kilowatt array that will help ease the energy load of the complex.

THE ACTIVISTS WHO FOUNDED the town of Portola Valley, Calif., in 1964 were determined to protect its scenic hillsides south of San Francisco from large-scale residential development. That same ethos came into play 40 years later, when the town decided to replace a surplus school with a multi-use town center. The top priorities: preserving open space, restoring natural habitat, and connecting to the landscape.

The new, \$16 million Portola Valley Town Center occupies an 11-acre site beside a meadow and walnut grove. But its three main buildings—a library, town hall, and community hall—are placed away from the location of the old school, which was discovered to have been straddling the San Andreas Fault. By tucking the new complex in a corner of the site, the architects made space for a new baseball field, tennis courts, and a 300-foot-long stretch of restored creek that had been diverted into a culvert.

Designed by two Emeryville, Calif., firms—Siegel & Strain Architects with Goring & Straja Architects—the

handsome civic center benefits from the enlightened views of town staff and highly involved citizens, who raised most of the money for the complex privately. The buildings huddle around a paved plaza and public lawn, where events such as an annual barbecue festival are held. Wide gabled roofs lend a familiarity to the buildings, whose deep sheltering porches and sunscreens of reclaimed Alaskan yellow cedar shade generous windows. Reclaimed vertical redwood siding relates the buildings to two towering redwood groves on the site.

Sustainability was a vital issue to the town, which consistently raised the bar as the project advanced. “Most of our projects get watered down as they go along,” says architect Larry Strain. “This one got greener and greener.” Rather than demolish the old school, they disassembled it to salvage materials. Douglas fir planks were remilled into wall paneling and ceiling slats for the new buildings.





Concrete and asphalt were ground and reused as base rock for paths and service roads. In all, some 90 percent of the material from the deconstructed buildings was saved from landfills.

The comfortably scaled interiors reveal other eco-friendly gestures. Flooring in the community hall's large meeting room, for example, was milled from local eucalyptus trees. Alder trees cut down to make way for the new ball field now wrap distinctive columns inside the buildings. And high-slag concrete—used in foundations, floor slabs, and library alcoves—lowered the project's carbon footprint by 125 tons.

Building systems serve the sustainable agenda too. Passive design strategies include natural ventilation, daylighting, thermal mass, and exterior shading. In the most heavily used buildings, radiant-floor heating and nighttime cooling systems keep energy use to a minimum. Three arrays of roof-mounted photovoltaic panels, coupled with the efficient design, result in 53 percent less energy use than required by code.

Strain says the goal from the start had been to make the buildings green without seeking LEED certification. Midway through the process, the town decided to go for LEED Platinum. "We finally realized that the project would be easier to get built as a green project with LEED behind it—that the contractors understood what that meant," Strain says. "It's a way of implementing green."

Project Credits

Project Portola Valley Town Center, Portola Valley, Calif.

Client Portola Valley

Architect Siegel & Strain Architects, Emeryville, Calif.—Larry Strain, Susi Marzuola, Michael Hayden (project team); Goring & Straja Architects, Emeryville—Jim Goring, Theresia Kurnadi, Tom Beil (project team)

Interiors Staprans Design; Pivot Interiors

Project/Construction Manager

TBI Construction and Construction Management

Landscape Lutsko Associates; Carducci & Associates

Structural Forell/Elsesser Engineers

Civil Engineer BKF Engineers

M/P Rumsey Engineers

Electrical Integrated Design Associates

Lighting David Nelson Associates

Energy Consultant High Sun Engineering

Acoustics Ewart Wetherill

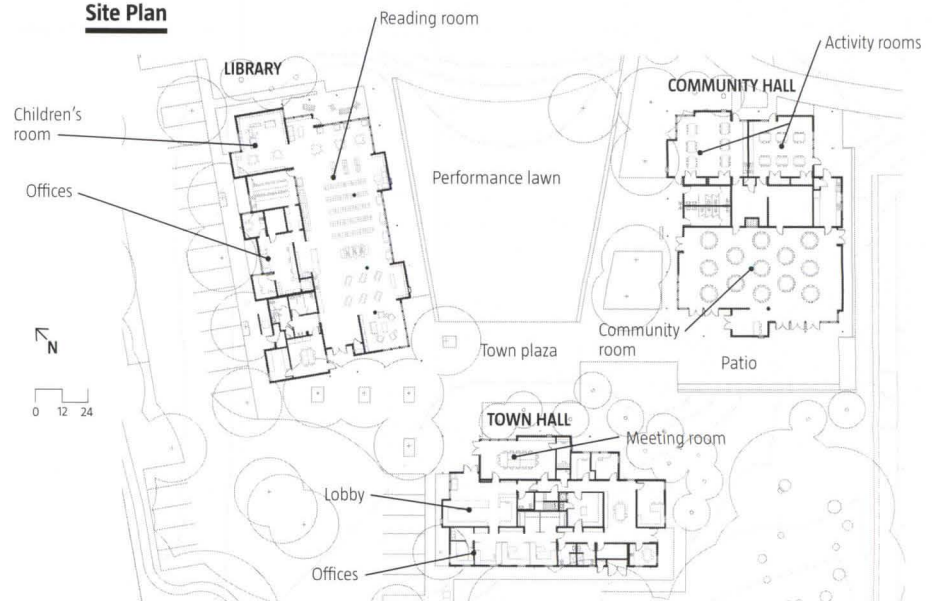
Rendering Al Forster

Cost \$16 million

Size 25,000 square feet (buildings); 464,900 square feet (paving, landscaping, and playing fields)



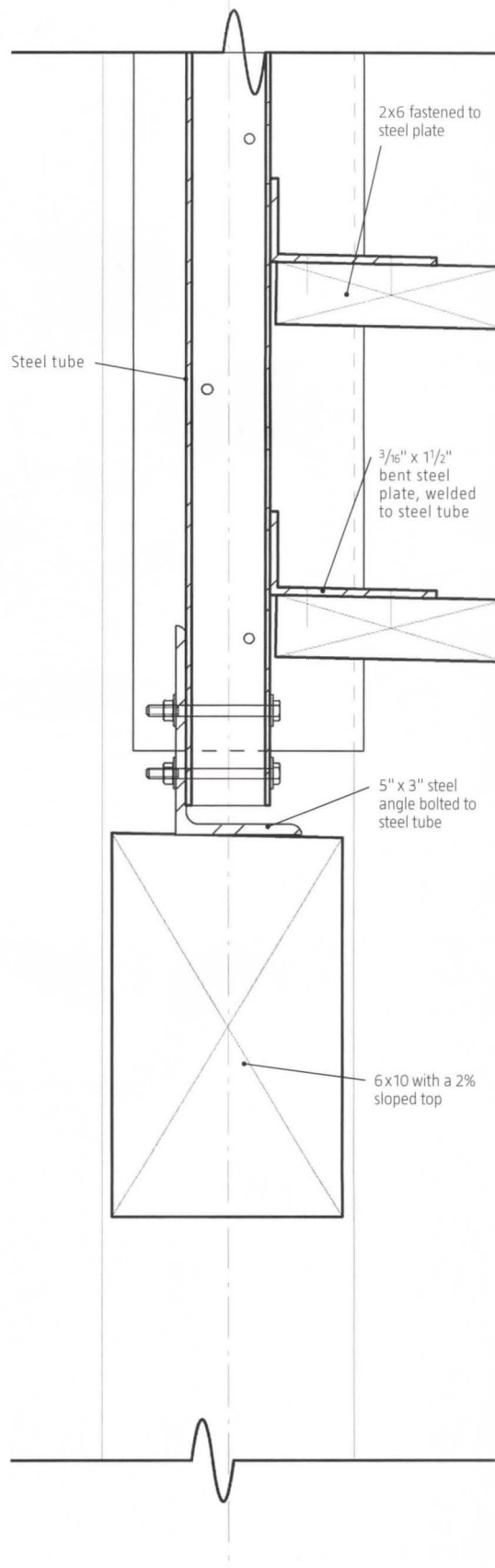
Site Plan





1

Curtain-Wall Detail



1. Each of the canted roofs of the three main structures is engineered to have one low point where rainwater will run off. Chain rainwater leaders take the place of gutters and manage the water runoff, which the architects hope will soon be able to be collected and diverted to a cistern. The rainwater would then be used to irrigate the playing fields and performance lawn, which will need ample water in a drought-prone region.

2. All three main buildings incorporate sunshades composed of 2x6 boards of reclaimed Alaskan yellow cedar from a salvage yard in the Pacific Northwest. The wood was chosen specifically because over time it will fade to a silver-gray color that will help reflect more light into the buildings' interiors. The other timber sourced for the project, including 6x10 horizontal beams reclaimed from the school that used to occupy the site and redwood cladding from McMullin Sawmill in Crescent City, Calif.—milled from dead and downed and beach-salvaged trees—will weather darker.



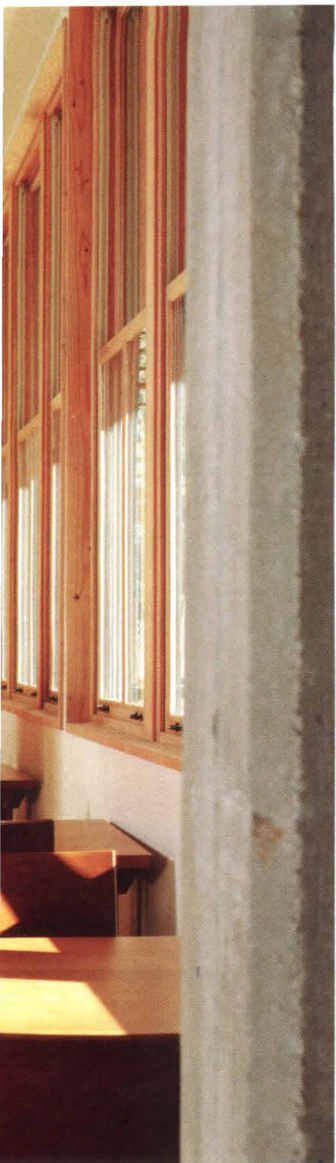
2

1. The reading room that holds the main collection of the Portola Valley Library is an airy and light-filled space thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows and skylights. The wall paneling and ceiling slats—elements that appear in all three main buildings—are made from milled Douglas fir roof decking salvaged from the dismantled school.

2. A room was set aside in the library for children's books and activities. The low slope of the roof creates an intimate environment, welcoming to Portola Valley's smaller denizens. Thick Douglas fir walls help to visually divide the space and absorb sound to prevent disturbance in the nearby main reading room.

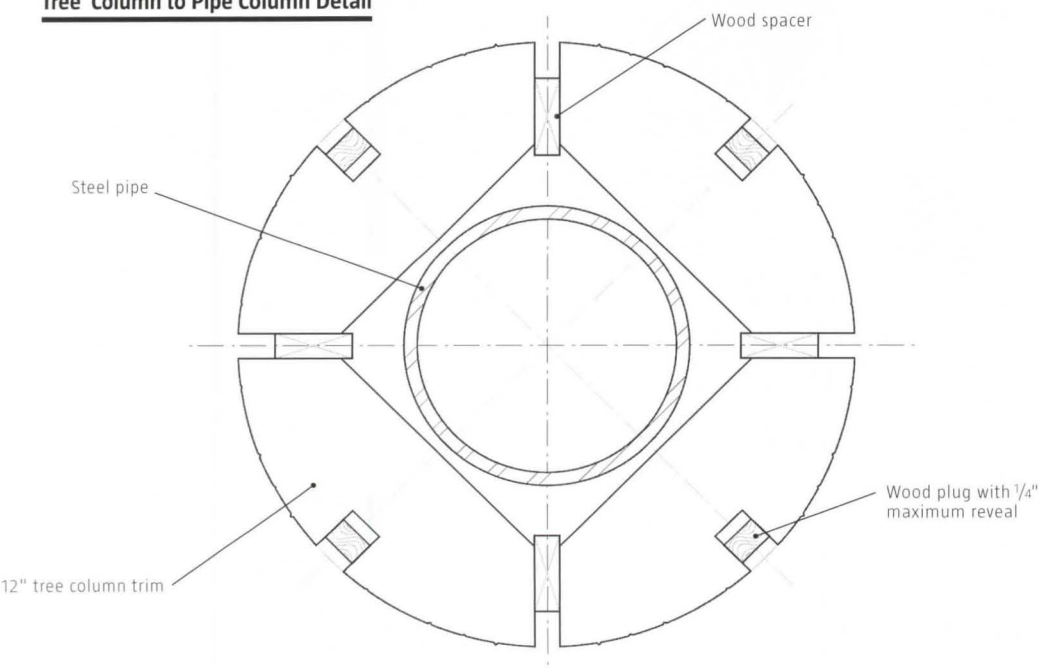
3. The community room in the town center's community hall is a multipurpose space designed to allow for meetings, parties, and other events. Supporting the roof is a tree column—an unusual construction that wraps a steel-pipe support with the split trunk of one of the trees felled to make way for the complex's sports fields. Multiple doors and windows can be opened to make the room an indoor/outdoor space during the milder months.





2

Tree Column to Pipe Column Detail



TOOLBOX

Photovoltaics

SunPower Corp.
sunpowercorp.com
Three arrays of roof-mounted photovoltaic panels generate 76 kw of power on site. The architects specified SunPower 210 panels with an efficiency rating of 16.9%, one of the highest available ratings. They also selected the panels for their uniform black appearance, which complements the design of the buildings.

Slatted Ceilings

gWood
gwood.com
The architects designed slatted ceilings to improve acoustics in important interiors, including the library reading room, town hall lobby, emergency operations center, and multipurpose room in the community hall. Working with gWood, a Springfield, Ore., manufacturer of suspended wood ceilings, the architects salvaged 2x6 roof decking from the old school and remilled it into 1x3 slats with a resawn finish to absorb a stain. The wood was pickled with a white stain to increase reflectivity and improve daylighting.

Aluminum-Clad Windows

Loewen
loewen.com
Large double-hung windows and awning windows in the clerestories allow for natural ventilation. The architects selected aluminum-clad windows from Loewen because of the manufacturer's promise of extended life and reduced maintenance. In addition, Loewen makes the windows with FSC-certified wood, which was an important consideration. The windows are dual-glazed with Cardinal LoE³-366 coated glass, which combines good light transmittance and thermal performance.

Bulletin Boards

Forbo
forbolinoeumna.com
Large wall areas in the two community hall classrooms—used frequently for children's education—are covered in Forbo Marmoleum Bulletin Board. This low-VOC, biodegradable material is made from linseed oil, cork, resin binders, and dry pigments mounted on natural jute backing. The cork qualifies as a rapidly renewable resource.



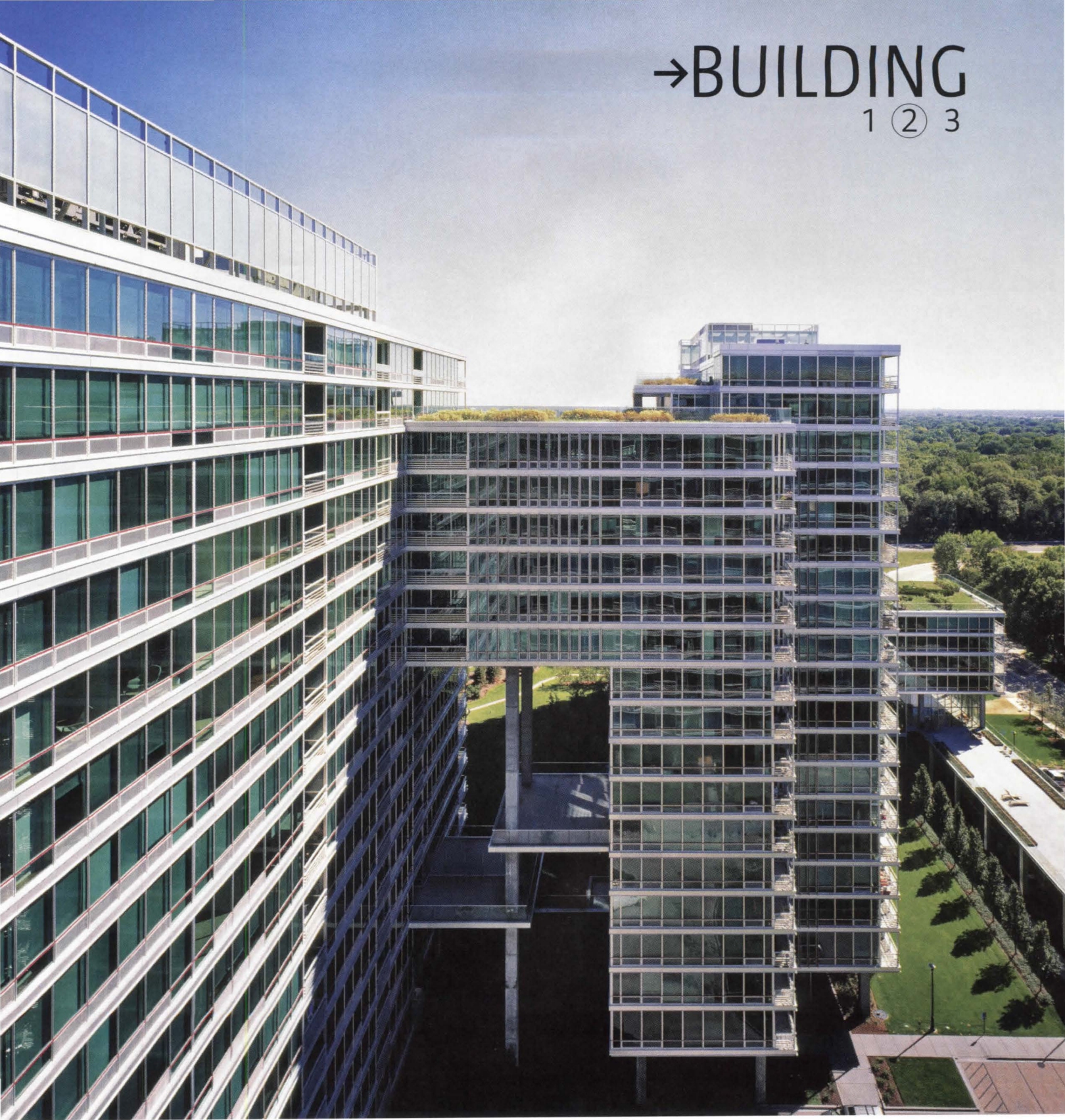
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TEXT BY EDWARD KEGAN

This monolithic, 650-unit condominium complex is broken up by cantilevered balconies and enlivened by green roofs at several levels, the largest of which is 1.2 acres.

OLD ORCHARD WOODS CONDOMINIUMS

SKOKIE, ILL.
OPTIMA

Project Credits

Project Old Orchard Woods, Skokie, Ill.
Client Optima Old Orchard Woods LLC, Glencoe, Ill.

Architect/General Contractor Optima, Glencoe, Ill.—David C. Hovey (architect of record); Tod Desmarais, Matt Cison, Roman Wachula, Mike Schwerzler, Jim Evans, Benjamin Yonce (design team)

Consulting Engineer CS Associates
Size 1.5 million square feet

1. The towers are clad entirely with an aluminum-and-glass curtain-wall system crafted by Chinese company PD Manufacturing International. The system has integral sunshades (like the two-tiered red aluminum panels on windows on some south and west façades) to offset glare in a neighborhood where the only sources of shade for each tower are the other two towers in the complex.

2. In part as a nod to an adjacent forest preserve, and in part to offset the urban heat island effect, the Old Orchard Woods complex makes liberal use of green roofs. Visible at multiple levels, the main green space on the fourth floor is accessible to residents and serves as a private 1.2-acre park. All of the green roofs use American Hydrotech assemblies—the system on the higher levels has sedum, grasses, and herbs and requires no maintenance, whereas the system on the fourth floor needs to be regularly maintained and allows for trees and other plants that have deeper root networks.

3. The ground floor of the complex is largely given over to parking, which spills out to the forecourt of the complex. An elevated concrete bridge (at right) serves as a sun deck where residents can lounge and provides shading for guest parking.





THE LOW-SCALE SPRAWL of Skokie, Ill., a Chicago suburb some 14 miles northwest of the Loop's iconic high-rises, has recently sprouted a skyline of its own—a trio of interconnected 20-story towers that form Old Orchard Woods. With more than 600 condominium units carved out from a total area of a million and a half square feet, the complex is considerably larger than many of its downtown brethren.

The project's architect is David Hovey of Glencoe, Ill.-based Optima. Hovey also acts as the developer, general contractor for his projects (see sidebar, next page), and his quadruple role gives him exceptional control over the intertwined economics, environmental strategies, and aesthetics of his buildings.

The complex is located on a wedge-shaped property located between an expressway to the east, a forest preserve to the west, and Stanley Tigerman's new Illinois Holocaust Museum to the south. Hovey sited two double-loaded towers of almost identical length running north-south and a longer, third tower running east-west. The towers sit atop a four-story base, which incorporates an entrance courtyard and amenities such as parking, a swimming pool, and a party room. Units on the lowest residential level have access to the main, 1.2-acre green roof above the parking garage. Other green roofs appear on higher levels, and have access from private terraces.

Nine-story voids—“essential to a building this massive,” says Hovey—separate the towers at the lower levels, but the building mass is continuous on the upper floors. In reality, there are no direct programmatic connections between the three towers. They function separately. But the complex articulation of form isn't just an architectural conceit—it reflects Hovey's decades of experience marketing his own projects. “You provide a variety of floor plan types,” he says of the buildings' diverse footprint. “It gives people variety in size, views, and location in the building.”

Hovey studied architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology and still teaches there, and the academic connection is apparent in the functionalist aesthetics of Old Orchard Woods. Recessed balconies relieve the grid of an off-the-shelf curtain-wall system, with its cleanly integrated aluminum extrusions. Two shading devices add another purposeful layer of visual interest: a red-painted, two-tiered aluminum shade on some south and west elevations, and a vertical screen on the upper-level bridges between the towers.

Hovey's role as developer and general contractor had an equally significant impact. He juggled the logistics of construction to his advantage: A moving, single-tower crane was set on a railroad track between the three condo towers, eliminating the need for it to be disassembled and reassembled three times. Hovey chose a concrete structure because it is the most cost-effective material for apartment construction in the Chicago area, while the aluminum cladding he specified provides long-term ease of maintenance and protection against the region's harsh freeze/thaw cycles. And a phased construction schedule for the three buildings decreased the size of the construction loans he had to take out—all of which makes sense when architect, contractor, and developer are one.



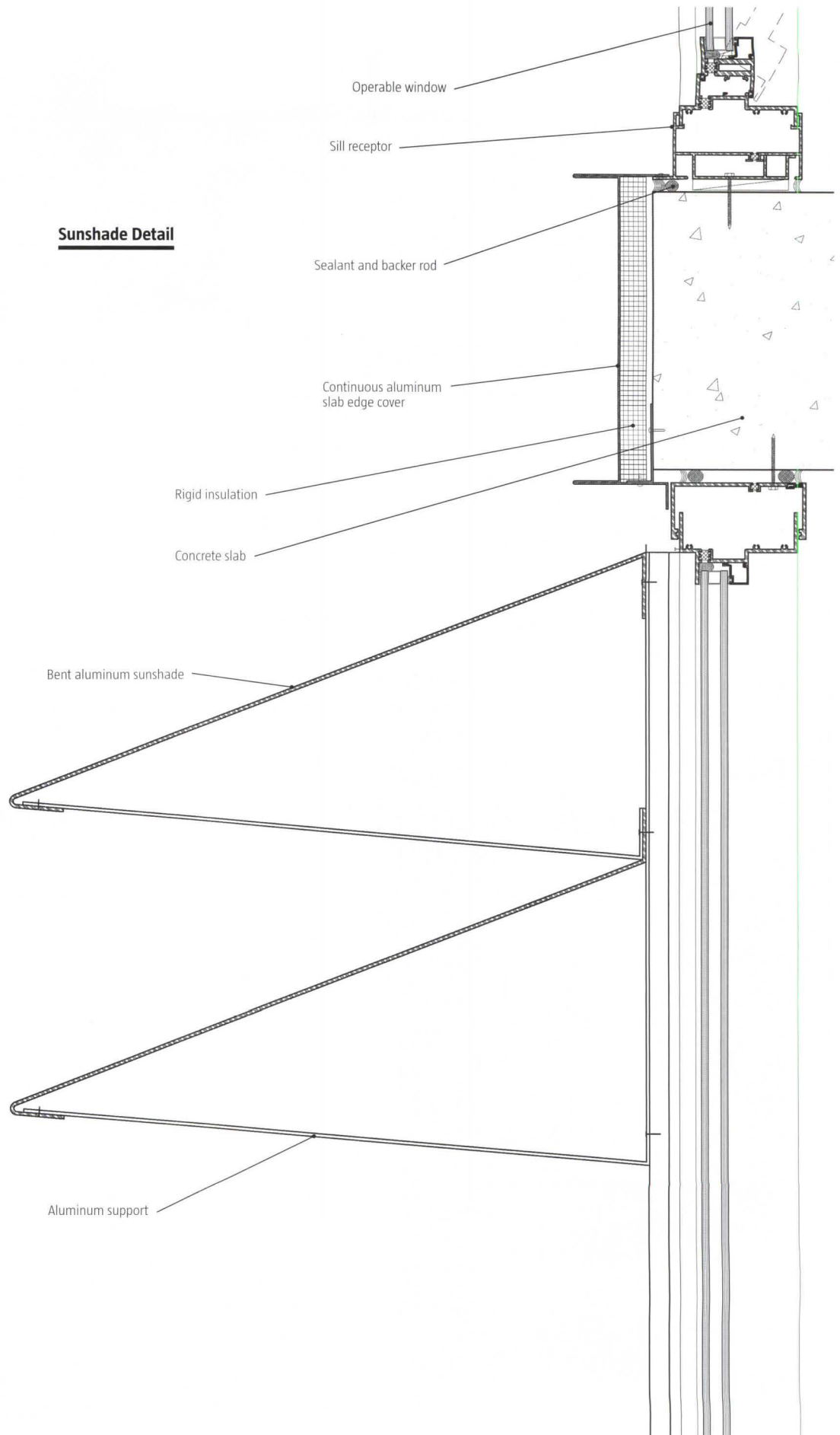
DAVID HOVEY

Optima founder David Hovey was born and raised in a seaside town of 900 people in New Zealand. He moved to the United States while in high school and received undergraduate and graduate degrees in architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) before spending four years working for Helmut Jahn. In 1978, he founded Optima—in order to develop, design, and market a six-unit residential complex near the University of Chicago.

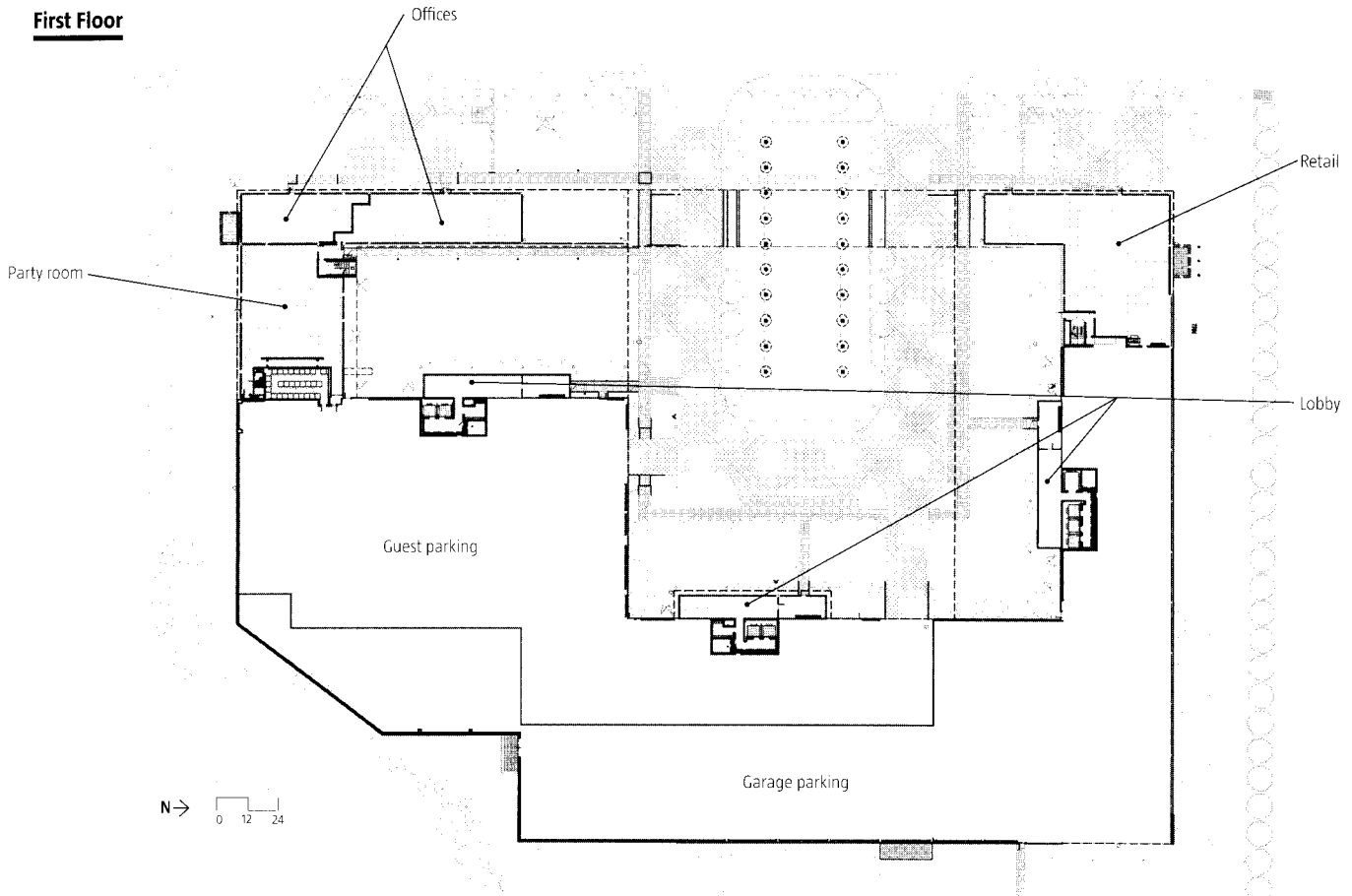
Hovey notes that he's self-taught in his multiple roles. He methodically worked his way from small to larger scale projects. "I had no idea how to do construction financing, marketing, accounting," he says. One constant in the three decades since has been his accountant. "I walked in the first day with almost no money and he said, 'I think you need more,'" Hovey says. That accountant hasn't just helped Hovey in his journey from architect to multi-faceted designer/developer/general contractor/marketer. Today, he's also the accountant to President Barack Obama.

The size of the firm varies, depending on the market, from 75 to 150 employees. Like Hovey, many of the people are trained architects who move from role to role within Optima. The 64-year-old Hovey splits his time between two offices—one in Chicago's North Shore suburb of Glencoe, the other in Scottsdale, Ariz. But despite the perilous economy, Hovey shows no signs of slowing down. "It's difficult for all of us," he says, but he notes one crucial difference between his firm and architecture firms. "If I want a new project," he says, "it's my decision to go out and buy a piece of land and start a new project. We don't have to wait for a client."

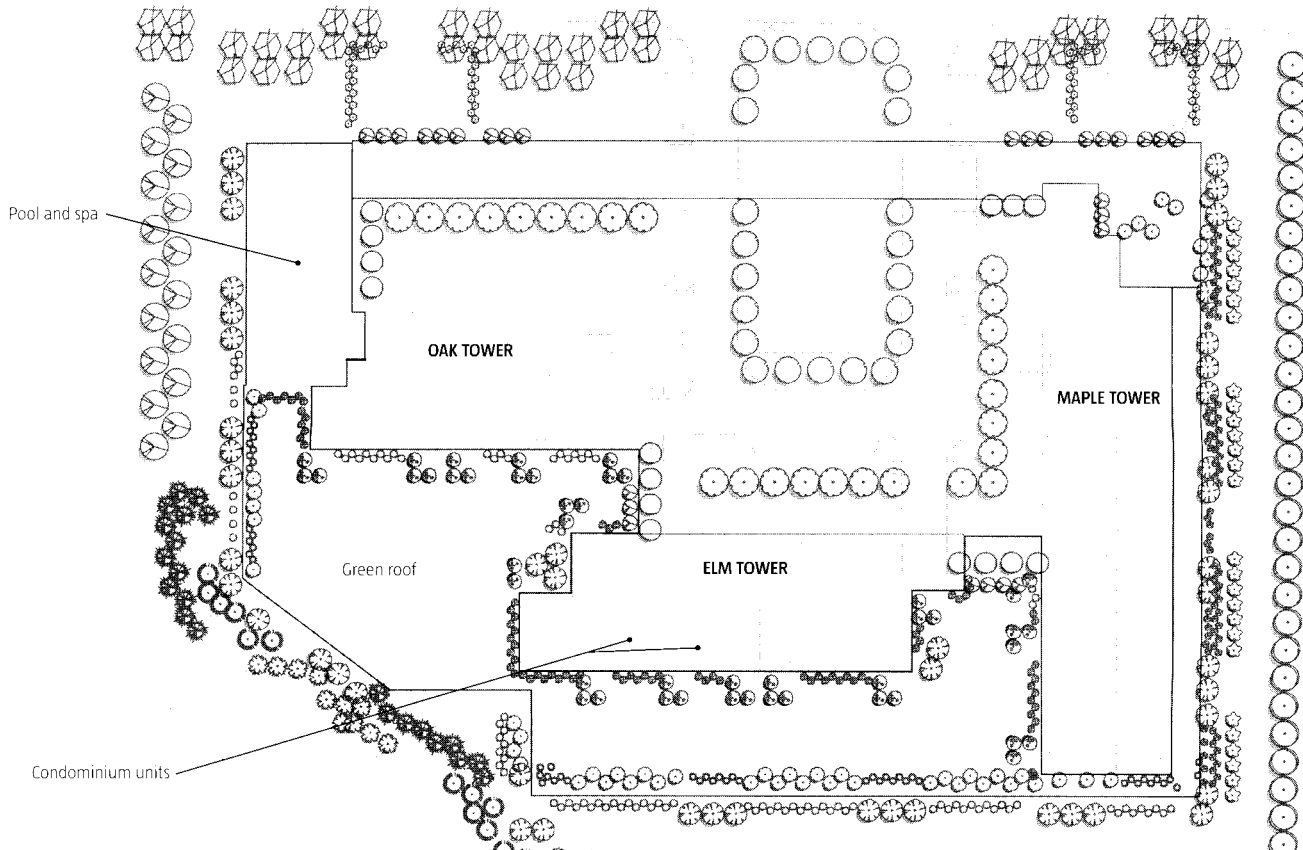
Sunshade Detail



First Floor



Fourth Floor



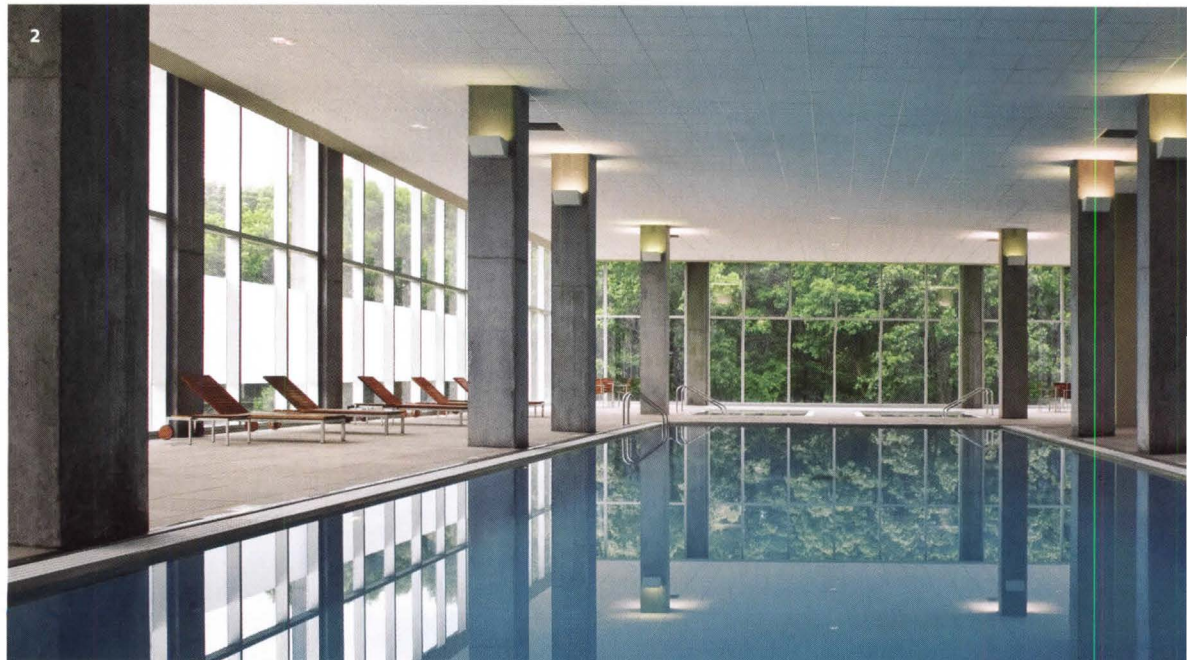
1. Each of the three towers has its own ground-floor elevator lobby. Terrazzo floors add grandeur while reducing maintenance, and cove lighting hidden above a floating panel adds loft to an already generously high ceiling.

2. Hovey selected concrete for the building structure because it is the cheapest material available for condominium complexes in the Chicago area, but he celebrates it in areas like the fourth-floor pool and spa, with its crisply formed columns.

3. Each unit has floor-to-ceiling windows. Many units have small terraces (set within the building volume), and many rooms have operable floor-level window panels that permit natural airflow.

4. Buyers are allowed to outfit their units with selections from a catalog of kitchen cabinets and other details. Like those of many other developments, the Old Orchard Woods catalog includes stock and custom options—such as Merillat and American cabinets—that have an effect on the duration of the installation process and the look of the end product.

5. Setbacks on the 18th and 19th floors allow for green roofs and require single- instead of double-loaded corridors. Private balconies open onto the green roofs, which prevents the apartments on these high floors from feeling detached from the surrounding landscape.





TOOLBOX

Curtain Wall

PD Manufacturing International Much of Old Orchard Woods' aesthetic comes from its aluminum-and-glass curtain-wall system with fully integrated horizontal and vertical sunscreens. These elements—including the balcony handrails—were manufactured by China-based PD Manufacturing International. This was Optima's first foray into China for an important building component. "We thought the distance might pose problems getting the materials," says Optima vice president Matt Cison, "but when we had a minor delay, the company overcompensated by air shipping."

Green Roof Assemblies

American Hydrotech hydrotechusa.com Green roofs throughout the complex all utilize garden roof systems from American Hydrotech—using a combination of their Extensive and Intensive product lines. The two lines are differentiated by the amount of maintenance required—the Extensive line comes with sedum, grass, and other maintenance-free plants, and the Intensive system can accommodate small trees, annuals, and other species that require regular gardening care. Optima has used the manufacturer's products for almost two decades. "For something this critical, we want to use what we think is the best," Cison says.

Cabinetry

Merillat merillat.com Ameriscan Designs ameriscandesigns.com David Hovey thinks from a developer's perspective in providing a variety of apartment configurations and views. The same is true of the kitchen cabinetry options, which allow buyers to select from three standard Merillat lines—Rutland II, Classic, and Masterpiece—all of which are available in a variety of wood and laminate finishes. For kitchen enthusiasts, Cison also notes a "custom" option from Ameriscan, a local manufacturer, with 14 cabinet door options ranging from maple and cherry to zebrawood, wenge, and Japanese tamo.

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TEXT BY BRUCE C. WEBB
PHOTOS BY ERIC LAIGNEL

THE GROVE IN DISCOVERY GREEN

HOUSTON
PAGE SOUTHERLAND PAGE

The new Grove restaurant by Larry Speck of Page Southerland Page is part of the Discovery Green development in Houston, a new, 12-acre downtown park that features a lake, dog parks, a playground, public art, and an amphitheater.

DISCOVERY GREEN is that rarest of Houston phenomena: a lively, successful downtown park that people actually seem to enjoy. Its planners, Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit inspired by noted sociologist William H. Whyte, eschewed a grand, formal scheme for a jigsaw puzzle of good parts that they call “the backyard of Houston.”

The planners facilitated extensive community workshops to find out what people wanted in the park, which is built over a 630-space underground parking garage. Participants called for a large, diverse program that ultimately includes playgrounds, ponds, a bandstand, jogging trails, fountains, a lake, gardens, and two restaurants—all crammed into 12 acres of what was formerly a no-man’s land between the George R. Brown

Convention Center and the central business district. As if to signal the significance of the endeavor, Jean Dubuffet’s “Monument au Fantôme,” a favorite Houston public art piece, was moved from a corner of a downtown high-rise block to the park’s eastern entrance, across from the convention center.

The Grove is the more upscale of the park’s two eateries, both of which are operated by the Schiller Del Grande Restaurant Group. Architect Larry Speck, a principal in the Austin office of Page Southerland Page, designed the 10,000-square-foot building to meet a goal of LEED Gold certification, as set by the Discovery



1. The two-story restaurant's north façade is dominated by floor-to-ceiling glazing on the first level that offers ample views into and out of the main dining space. A broad brick staircase leads to a terrace on the second story that extends over the first floor with a cantilevered balcony.

2. The flexible indoor/outdoor seating area on the second floor is clad on the floor, walls, and ceilings in wood planking that extends outdoors as the decking of the cantilevered balcony. Glass doors allow the seating area to extend out onto the balcony when Houston's hot, humid climate permits.

3. A second brick staircase gives second-floor access on the south side of the building. Together, the two staircases also serve to separate front-of-house functions—including the main dining room, restrooms, and bar—from back-of-house operations like the kitchen and loading dock. In contrast to the transparent glazing of the dining rooms, the volume housing the kitchen is clad in dark wood siding with few windows.



Green Conservancy, the nonprofit responsible for the park's development and maintenance. The restaurateurs initially were unenthusiastic about a modern building, according to Speck, because they thought it wouldn't do for the kind of gracious dining experience they had in mind. But the architect convinced them that modern construction would better connect with the park and with the goals of sustainable design.

The building is modern in all the right ways—less a polemical statement than a mature example of place-making. Organized with diagrammatic clarity, as a series of slipped, parallel bars of one and two stories, it uses the real phenomena of site and program to compose a building without architectural excesses. The architecture is reposed and deferential, most prominently in the ground-floor main dining room, a thin space between two active long edges: a window wall with views out to a tree-lined promenade on the north, and an open kitchen on the south.

While the structure is predominantly crisp, lightweight steel and glass, local brick clads the long box of serving spaces—the kitchen, bathrooms, the elevator core, and two broad exterior stairs. The brick mass buffers the dining room from a busy adjacent street and the torrid Houston sun. Customers entering from valet parking on the south and from a deck on the west arrive at a bar centered in the entry space.

The exposed steel frame conveys the building's structural rationale and gives a background syncopation to the spaces. Detailing is crisp and precise. Wood ceilings formed by installing cedar planks in the bottom flanges of the spanning members bring warmth to the dining space. Wooden floors extend into surrounding outdoor decks, and beams terminate in supporting brackets for the roof overhang, drawing inside and outside into continuity. Low-level interior lighting allows for outside views to be prominent, day or night.

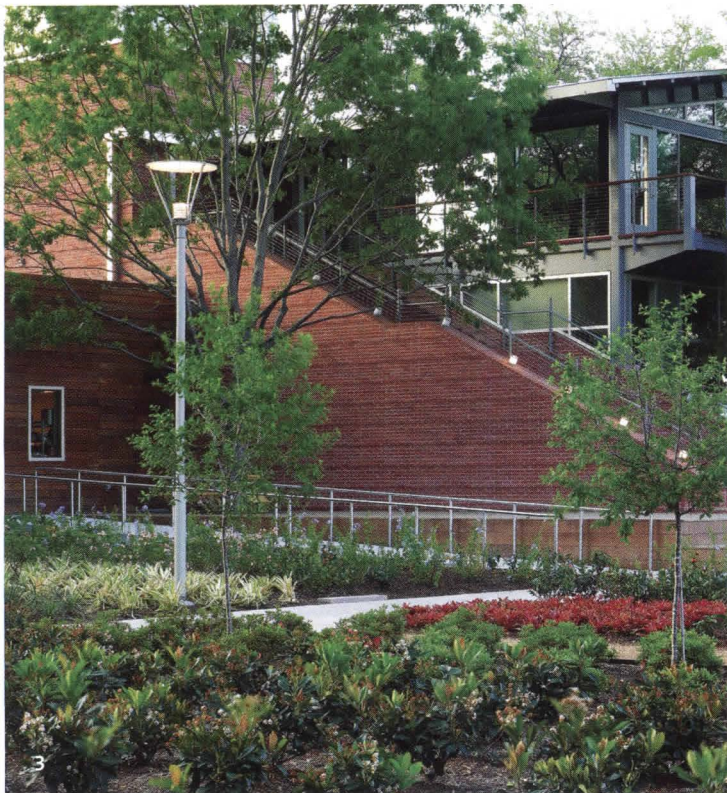
Above the restaurant proper, on the second floor, is a sizable terrace, dubbed the Tree House, and an indoor dining room. There is also an herb and vegetable garden. Solar panels that Speck intended for the roof, sadly, were not installed, and on the terrace itself, large umbrellas don't compensate for the lack of a shade roof.

The Houston you get depends on which way you look, and the view from the terrace is no exception. To the north, the building sidles into the upper reaches of a good-looking grove of high-rises; to the south rises the palisades of the Hilton convention hotel. The view toward downtown is a bit more disheveled, a work in progress as holding properties earn their keep as surface parking and await higher uses. Construction is a big part of the Houston genius loci, and the terrace provides an excellent front-row seat for watching new buildings go up, while sipping a frozen margarita.

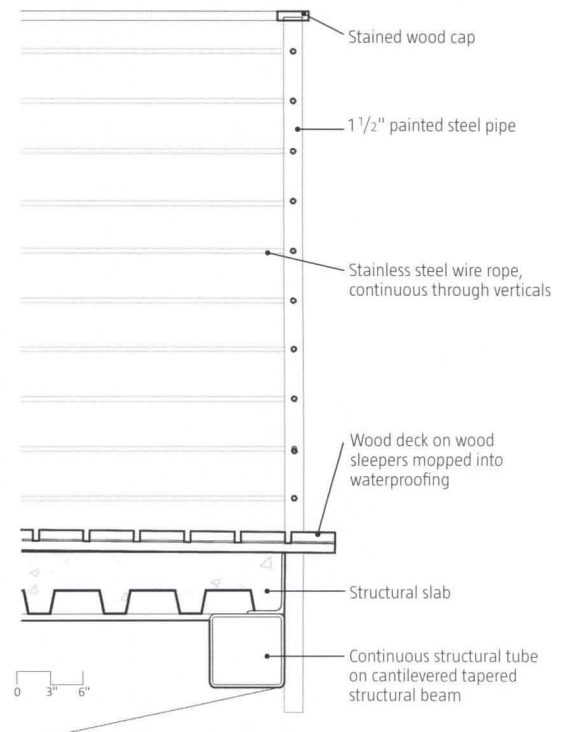


Project Credits

Project The Grove, Houston
Client Discovery Green Conservancy
Architect Page Southerland Page, Austin, Texas—Larry Speck (lead designer); Jeff Bricker (principal-in-charge); Robert Owens (project manager); Aaron Jones (project architect); Marcus Martinez (designer)
Interior Designer Schiller Del Grande Restaurant Group—Candice Schiller
Restaurant Planning Milton Architects
Landscape Architect Hargreaves Associates; Lauren Griffith Associates
Structural Engineer Henderson + Rogers
M/E/P Engineer Page Southerland Page
Civil Engineer TSC Engineering
Contractor Miner-Dederick Construction
Lighting Bos Lighting Design
Artist Margo Sawyer
Size 17,180 square feet



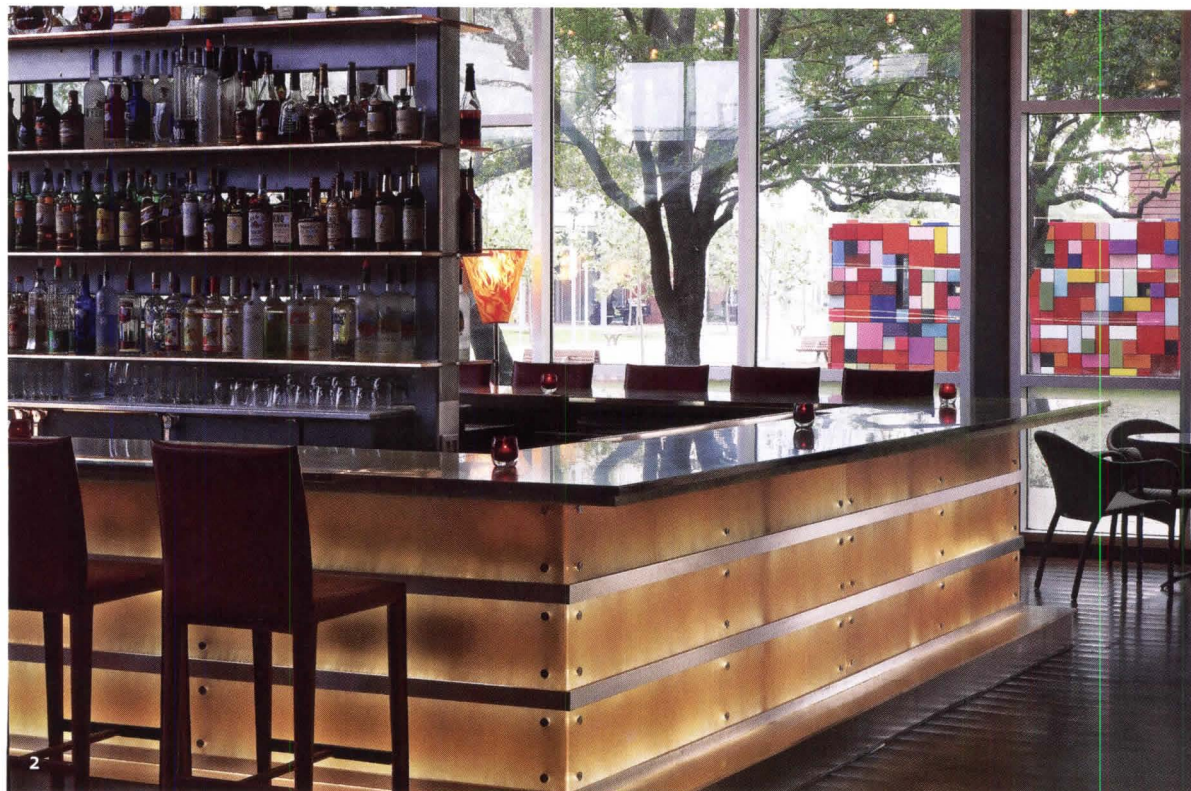
Balcony Corner Detail

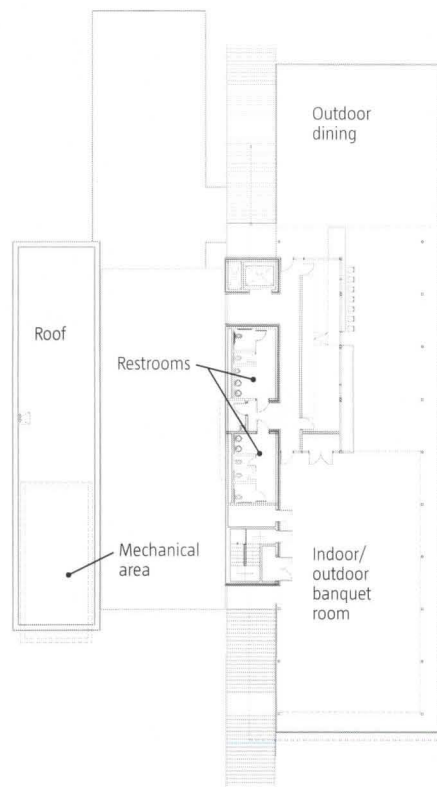


1. The main dining room uses a wood floor and ceiling, similar to the second-floor dining space. Expanses of glazing allow diners to enjoy views of the new downtown park while feasting on American fare ranging from salad and sandwiches to local seafood. Beyond the interior glass wall are two smaller dining spaces (denoted by the Louis Poulsen artichoke lighting fixtures) that can be closed off for private parties. The interiors were designed by a team from Schiller Del Grande Restaurant Group, the company that runs The Grove, in an effort to give the restaurant the same feel as the company's other properties.

2. The bar at The Grove is clad in glowing panels that mimic a rich material like alabaster. The effect is achieved by using 3form resin panels back-lit by fiber-optic strands that give the panels a gentle glow. Those perched on a bar stool enjoying one of the restaurant's signature drinks also have a front-row view of artist Margo Sawyer's wall of color blocks, a feature that fits well with Discovery Green's commitment to public art.

3. On the second-floor deck, patrons have a view of the Houston skyline—a reminder that despite the bucolic setting of the ground floor, the restaurant is in the heart of downtown. Plastic chairs and metal tables can withstand the region's summer thunderstorms, and the view of Discovery Green is maintained by a minimal custom handrail that features stainless steel wire cables threaded through painted steel pipe.



First Floor**Second Floor****TOOLBOX****White Oak Wide-Plank Flooring**
Allegheny Mountain Hardwood
Flooring*hickmanwoods.com*

The family-owned firm is an FSC-certified member of the Rainforest Alliance and specializes in rift and quartersawn red and white oak solid-wood flooring. Wide-plank white oak flooring is featured in the main dining room on the first level.

Cedar Plank Ceilings

gWood

gwood.com

Fiberglass panels back the wood face of gWood's ceiling system to improve acoustical performance. The company also is FSC certified.

Ceramic Glazed Brick

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Used on the kitchen walls, these extruded clay bricks are glazed with an impervious surface that complies with health department code requirements for kitchens. Elgin Butler uses a "no waste, no discharge" manufacturing process.

Ecoresin

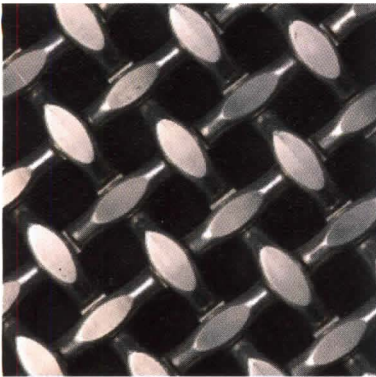
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Postindustrial recycled materials were used to make the Ecoresin countertops—the product is made with a minimum of 40% recycled materials. Available in several colors and patterns, the countertops were installed using low-VOC adhesives and sealants.



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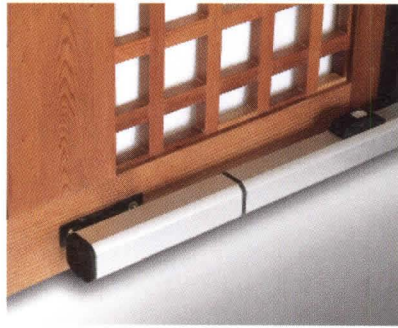


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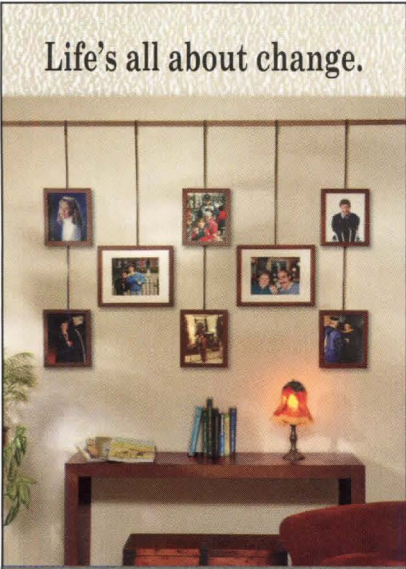
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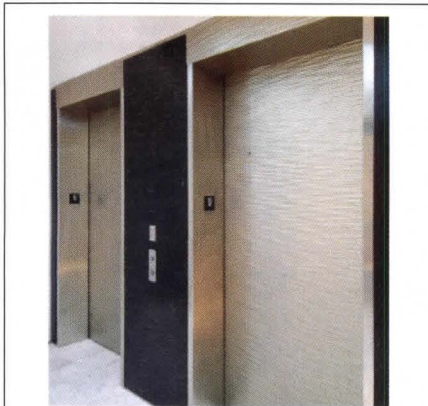
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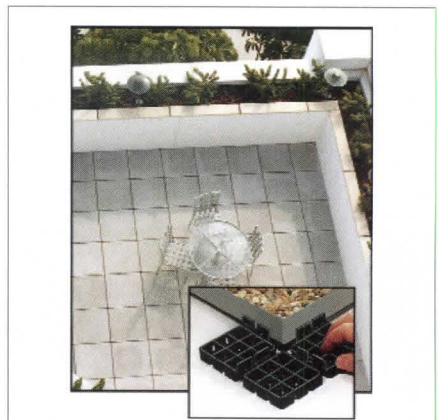


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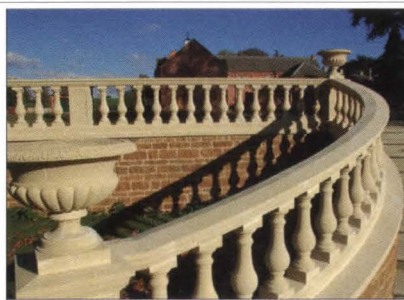
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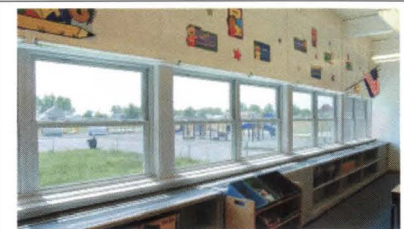
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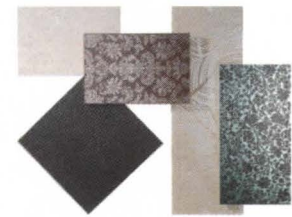
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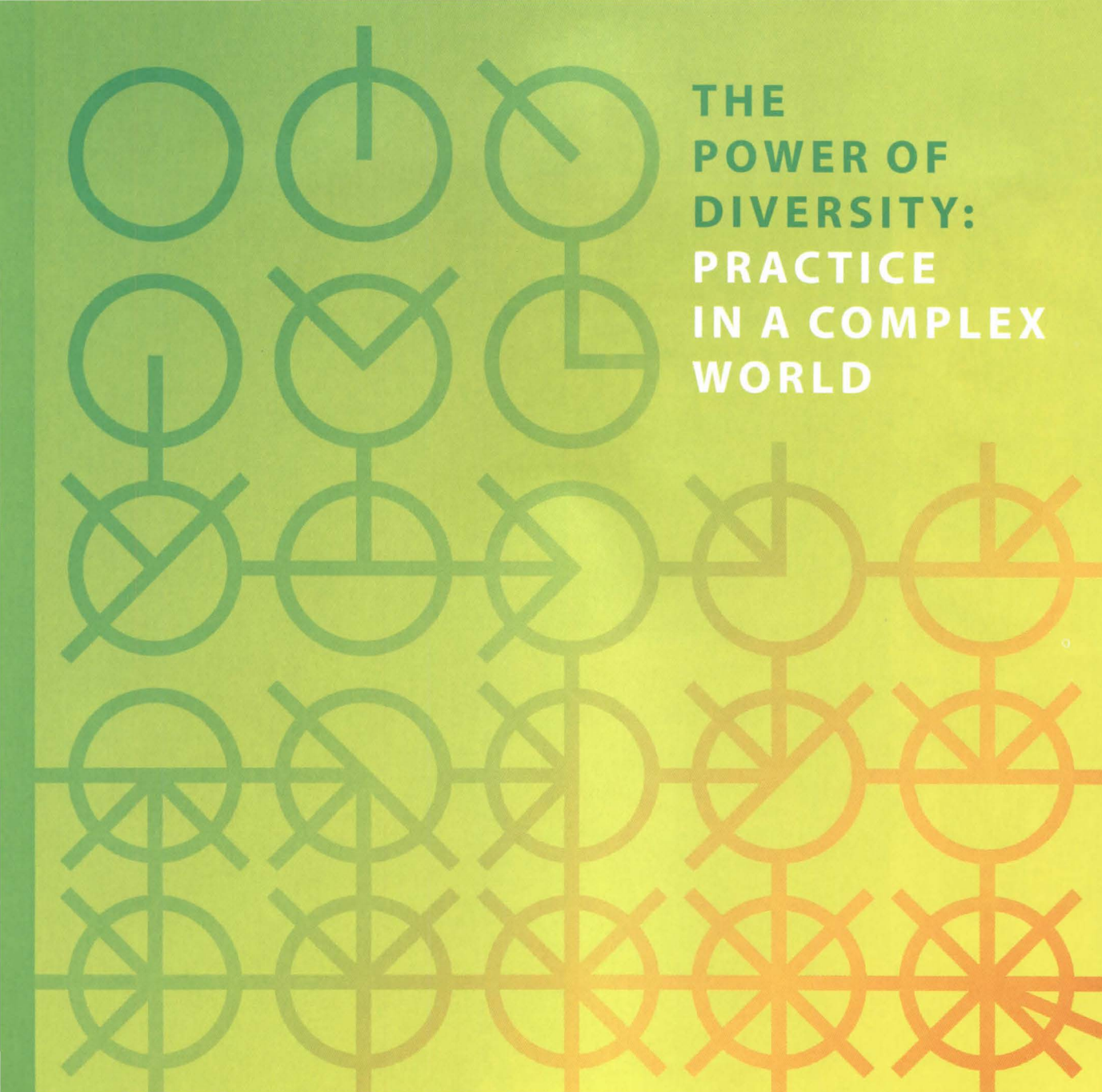
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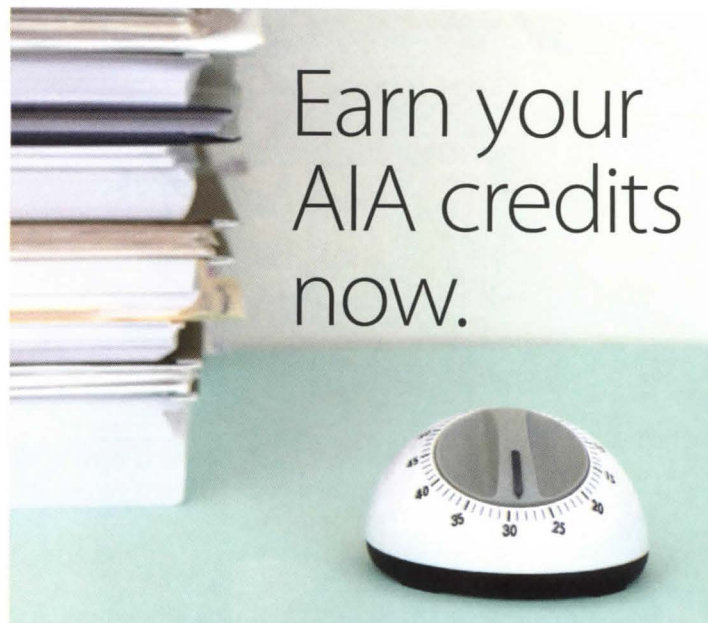
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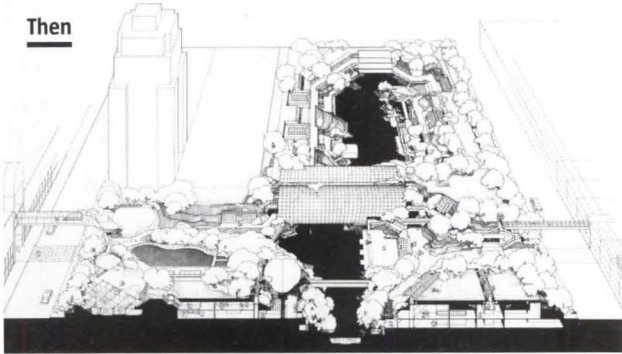
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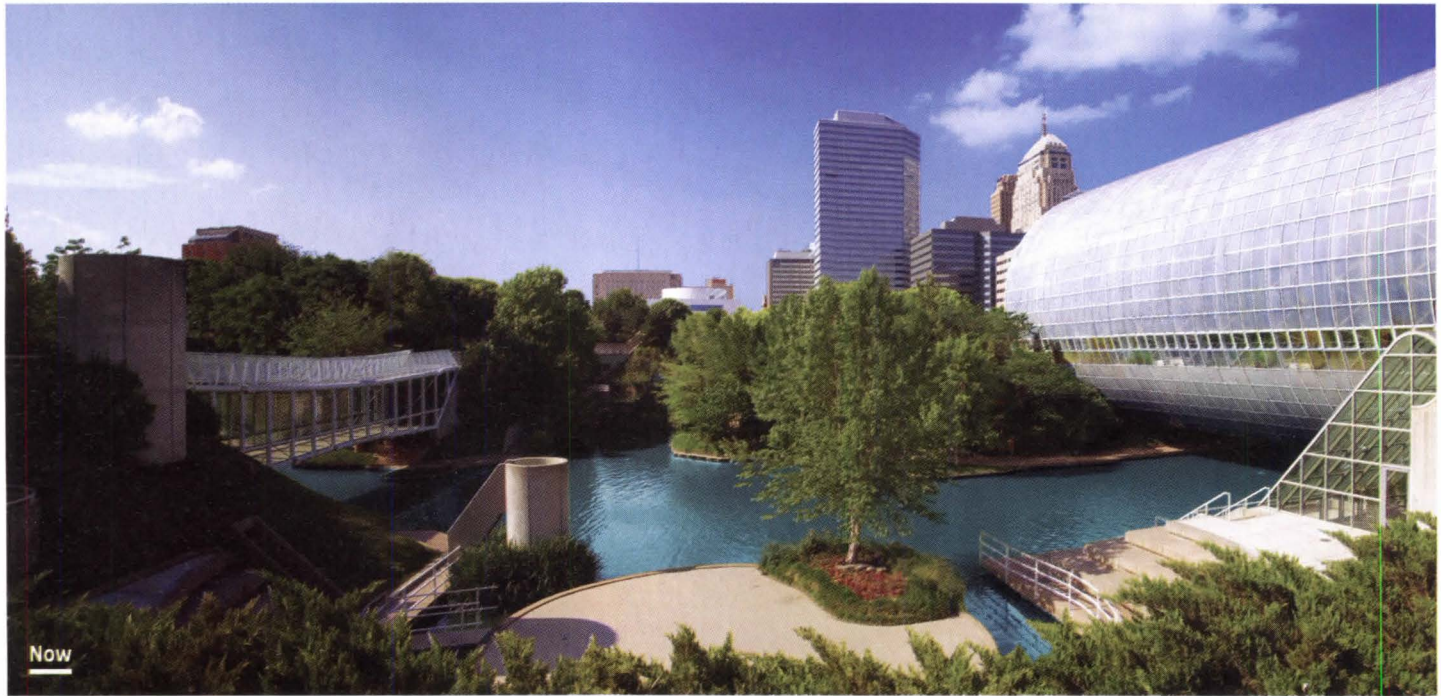
→ 1973 P/A FIRST AWARD WINNER

GREENING THE CITY

Then



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Now

1973 P/A Awards Jury: Arthur Erickson, Hugh Hardy, John Johansen, William LeMessurier, and Donald Stull.

WHEN THE 1973 P/A AWARDS JURY MET, the era of federally funded urban renewal was ending, but the dream of transforming urban downtowns remained compelling. The Myriad Gardens plan for Oklahoma City received a rarely bestowed First Award.

The scheme departed radically from renewal precedents by proposing a downtown botanical garden. Its architects, Conklin & Rossant of New York, hadn't been asked to design a garden, but rather to propose uses for a 17-acre renewal tract. They won the commission with their concept of exposing an underground watercourse as a pond, then bridging it with a conservatory.

Architect William Conklin reports that the P/A Award gave crucial encouragement to civic leaders and donors hoping to expand on the design prestige generated by juror John Johansen's 1970 Mummens Theater on an

adjoining block. Fund-raising for the gardens suffered from the vagaries of Oklahoma's oil-based economy. Construction of the conservatory took place from 1981 to 1985, but its tropical plantings weren't ready for public view until 1988.

Many planned ancillary facilities such as restaurants, galleries, and cinemas were eliminated—and aren't missed. One surviving feature is a pond-side amphitheater, site of a popular annual Shakespeare series. Ongoing renovations to the complex will soon include overdue replacement of the conservatory's acrylic glazing.

The urban revival now apparent in Oklahoma City gathered momentum only in the 1990s, after the gardens were completed. Clearly, this unique amenity has helped to attract further investment and activity to this once-forlorn downtown. □



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