

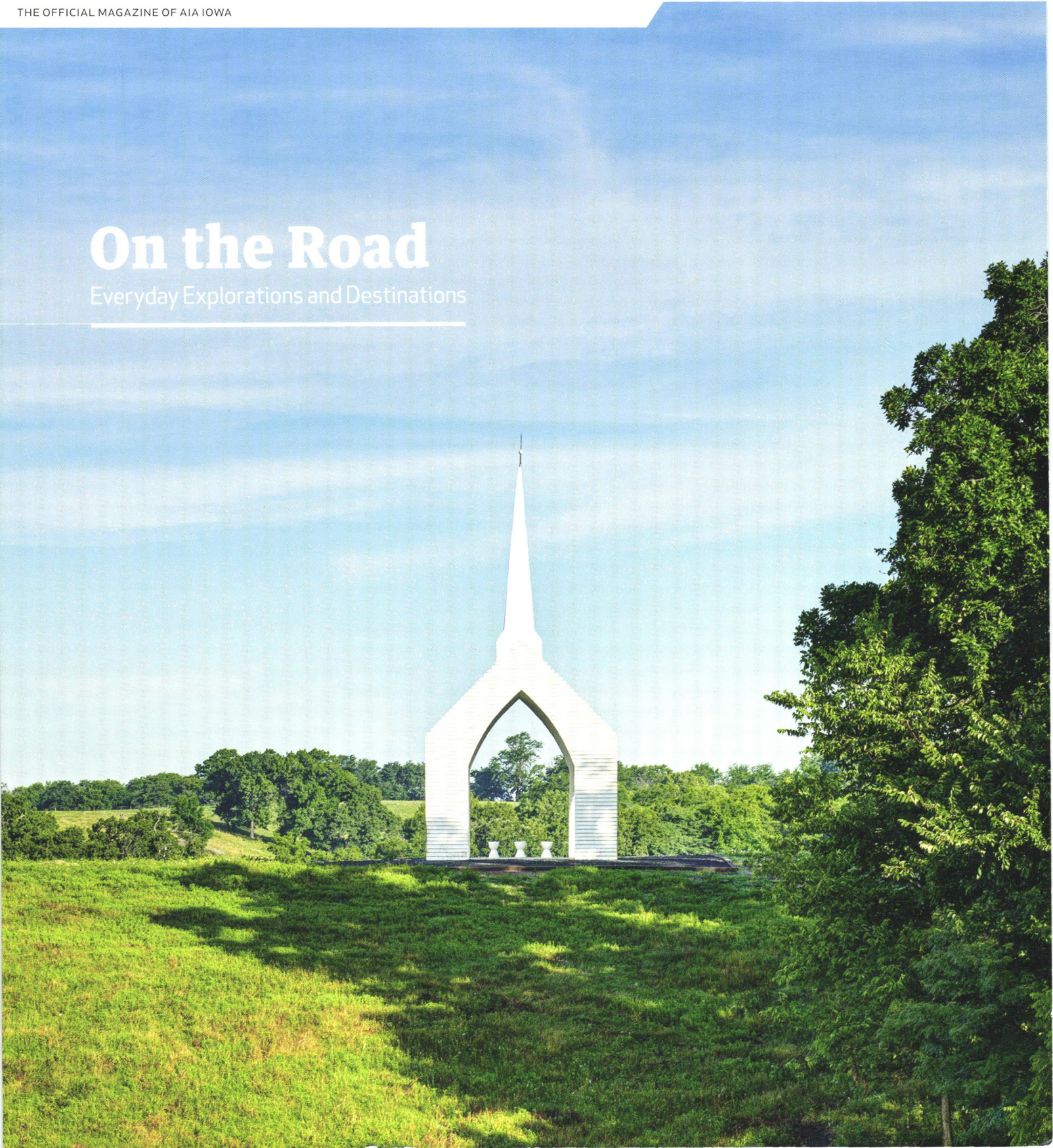
CHapel PROVIDES REFUGE AND REFLECTION **RECOGNITIONS FROM SPRING CONFERENCE AND ARCHITECTURE MONTH**
COMMUNITY WELLNESS CENTER REALIZES A 20-YEAR VISION IN MT. VERNON
CANOPY ENRICHES SIDEWALK BALLET A LAKESIDE PLOT BECOMES A MEMORABLE RETREAT
SUMMER 2021

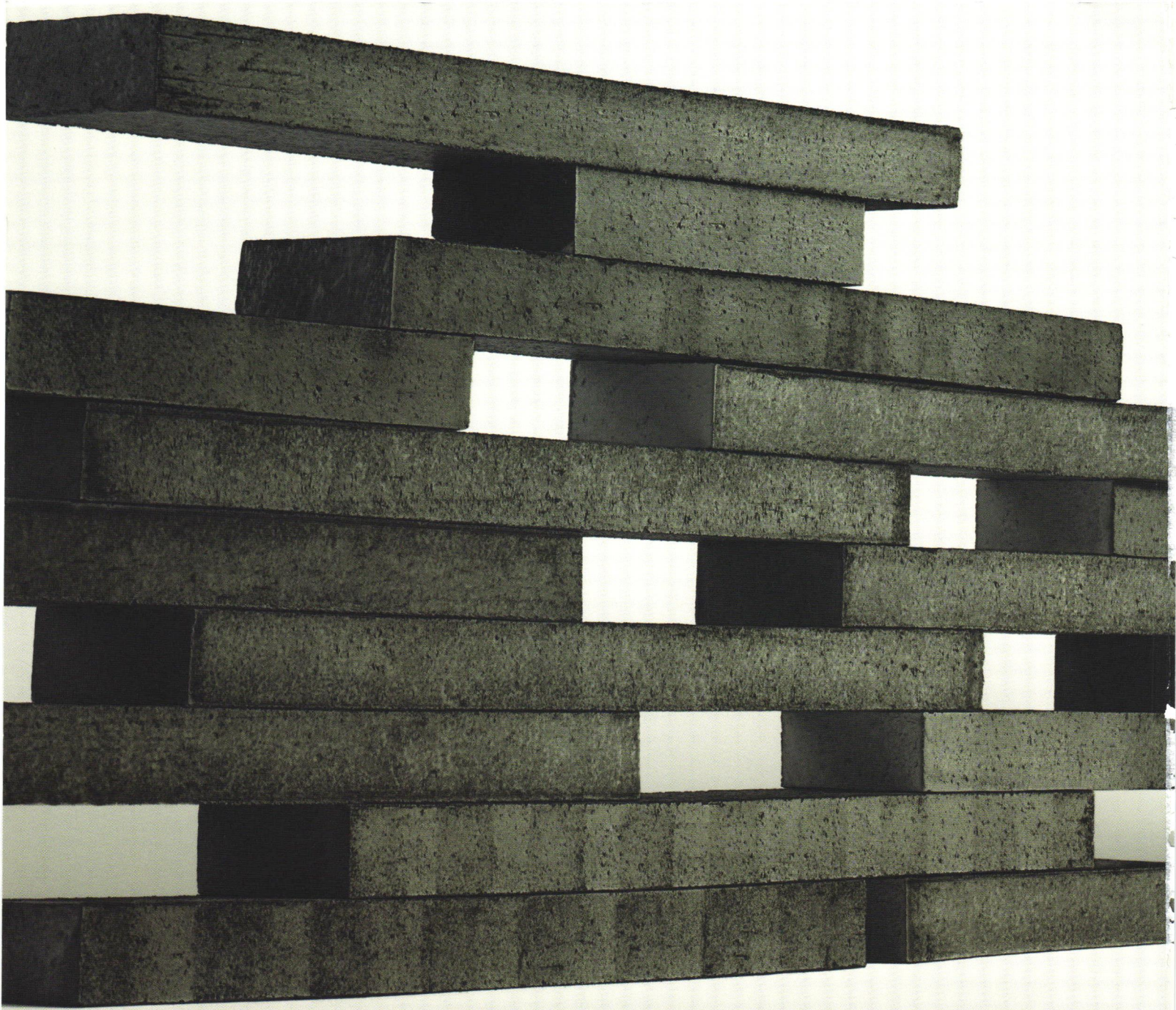
ia architect

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIA IOWA

On the Road

Everyday Explorations and Destinations





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editor's letter



Justin Burnham, Assoc. AIA

Editor, Iowa Architect

Welcome!

Long before I met any practicing architects, architecture was often part of my backdrop. My upbringing in Charles City, Iowa, included an Art Deco movie theater on Main Street and a Frank Lloyd Wright home along the Cedar River. Visits to my grandparents in St. Paul Park, Minnesota, included trips to a stunning Ralph Rapson church. Summer camps spanned from Decorah to Iowa City. The list goes on, and I wish I had more space to elaborate on these valued experiences.

Some roads are traveled often while others lead to special destinations, but impactful architecture is part of life's routines and rituals. This issue features work ranging from small towns (McGregor, Moravia, Mount Vernon, and Okoboji) to two of the largest cities in our state (Iowa City, West Des Moines). We explore an open-air chapel, two amphitheaters, a community wellness center, and two residences. Throughout, we consider how individuals engage and disengage.

The siting of a building may relate to how it's seen from a car window or it may engage nature to withhold being seen. This summer, we explore projects that seamlessly connect to outdoors.

iaarchitect

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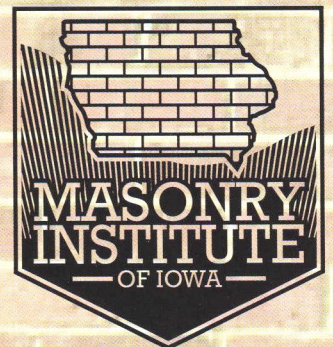
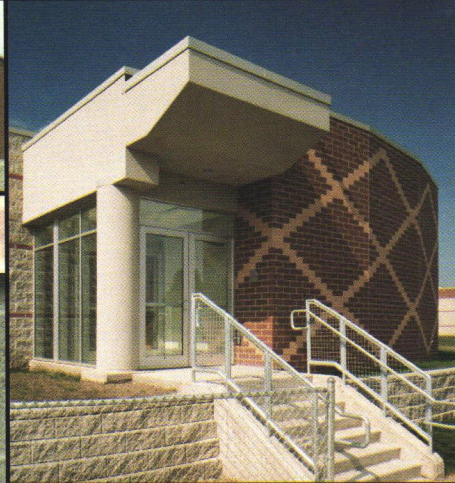
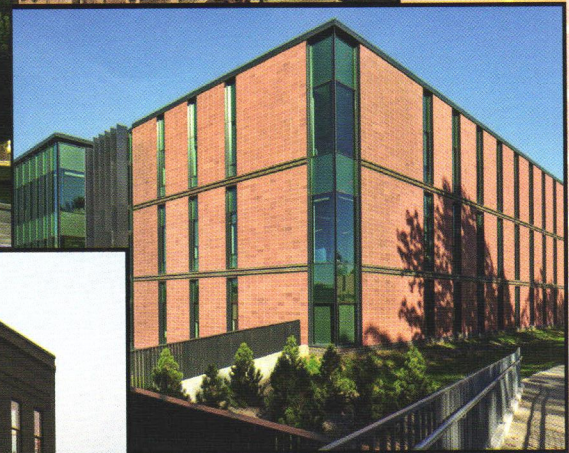
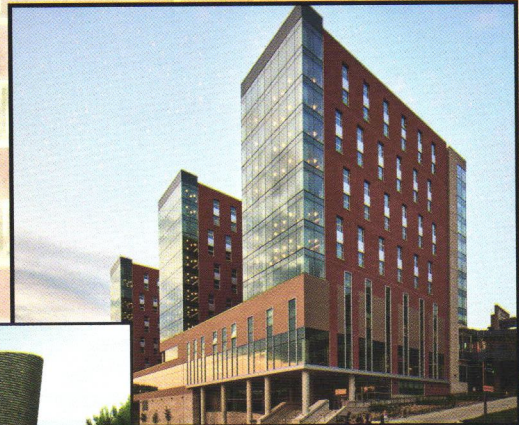
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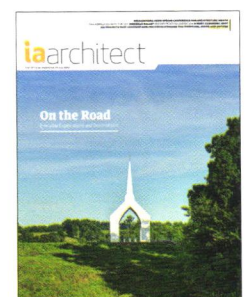
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Years of Membership

Longstanding AIA Iowa members recognized for commitment to the chapter.

Every year at the Chapter's Spring Conference, AIA Iowa recognizes licensed members who have shown their longstanding commitment to the Chapter and the profession through years of continuous membership. Members receive recognition certificates starting at 25 years of membership, followed by 35, and then every five years in subsequence. This annual observance is special to AIA Iowa members and inspires others to achieve a similar commitment. 2021 was no different. Chapter leaders were thrilled to recognize 39 long-term members with Years of Membership Certificates at our virtual Spring Conference on April 29.

"Thank you to AIA Iowa for the opportunities you've provided me and your support over the past 25 plus years," mentioned Jill Goedken, AIA, owner of SPECcetera, recipient of a 25-year certificate. "I am delighted to be recognized along with so many of my colleagues and former ISU classmates."

Terry Allers, FAIA, President of Allers Architects and 2020 President of the National Council for Architecture Registration Boards, received his certificate for 45 years. He commented, "I am proud to be honored by AIA Iowa and to be associated with such a highly respected component of the AIA."

Congratulations and thank you to each recipient for your continued membership with the Chapter!

25 Years

Matthew J. Basye, AIA
David L. Brost, Jr., AIA
Pierce J. Coady, AIA
Steve P. Eppel, AIA
Terry L. Gebard, AIA
Terry J. Glade, AIA
Jill R. Goedken, AIA
Jeffrey S. Harris, AIA
Daniel R. Hunt, AIA
Sanjay D. Jani, AIA
Bradly D. Leeper, AIA
Edward L. Matt, AIA
John B. Overton, AIA
Eric D. Ritland, AIA
David J. Sorg, AIA
Channing E. Swanson, AIA
Daniel R. Swift, AIA
Jack L. Topp, AIA
Timothy A. Veatch, AIA
Roger B. Worm, AIA

35 Years

Philip A. Hodgin, AIA
Michael J. Kastner, AIA
Dennis J. Sharp, AIA
Victor R. Wieland, AIA

40 Years

Scott A. Hatfield, AIA
Gerald W. Kneeland, AIA
Gregory E. Larrison, AIA
Steve A. Rohrbach, AIA
Edward W. Storm, AIA
Allen M. Varney III, AIA
Glenn D. Vondra, AIA-E
Robert H. Warner, AIA

45 Years

Terry Lee Allers, FAIA
Robert P. Burns, AIA
William H. Dreyer, AIA

50 Years

William J. Ludwig, AIA
Roman Scholtz, AIA

55 Years

H. K. Bussard, FAIA

60 Years

Norman H. Rudi, AIA

People's Choice Awards

Annual award program gives the public an opportunity to vote for its favorite local architecture.

In celebration of Iowa Architecture Month in April, AIA Iowa hosts its annual People's Choice Awards. This awards program encourages firms to submit projects that are then juried by the public. Throughout the month of April, submitted projects are promoted to the public and then the public has opportunity to vote for its favorite architecture designed by AIA Iowa members.

"The biggest value of the People's Choice Awards Program is giving the general public, or people not regularly familiar, exposure to architecture in Iowa," said Joe Wallace, AIA, of OPN Architects and Co-Chair of the AIA Iowa Public Relations Committee. "It is a chance for family and friends to share excitement and ownership of a project they are passionate about. For the participating firms, People's Choice is an opportunity to contribute work that might not otherwise go to an awards jury to be recognized for their impact on the community. Community focus and generating excitement for architecture in Iowa: that is what Architecture Month is all about!"

AIA Iowa would like to extend our thanks to all firms who entered in the awards program and those who participated in voting. We encourage all participants to submit and vote again next year.



1ST PLACE

BROADLAWNS MEDICAL CENTER— SANDS VERTICAL EXPANSION

ARCHITECT: SHIVE-HATTERY
ARCHITECTURE + ENGINEERING
LOCATION: DES MOINES, IA



2ND PLACE

SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE— JOHN H. WITTE JR. HALL OF SCIENCES

ARCHITECT: DLR GROUP
LOCATION: WEST BURLINGTON, IA



3RD PLACE

LINN MAR INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

ARCHITECT: OPN ARCHITECTS
LOCATION: MARION, IA

In Collaboration WITH THE SKY

**Kite Choir—A modern interpretation
of the traditional singing kite.**

WORDS : BRENT HOFFMAN, ASSOC. AIA IMAGES : FIRAT ERDIM

Outside the Mainframe Studios window, perched up high on a distant building, hangs a large brightly colored windsock. For artist and Iowa State University (ISU) educator Firat Erdim, the windsock is used as an indicator to determine if conditions are ideal for kite flying. On this specific day, the weather is cold, the rain is intermittent, and there is little wind—simply put, the conditions are far from favorable to experience Kite Choir.

The development of Kite Choir is a modern interpretation that builds upon the traditional singing kites from China, Japan, Vietnam, and Bermuda. “I did not want to appropriate an older kite form from another culture,” says Erdim. Traditional singing kites are very rigid, heavy in a sense, and retain their form regardless of the wind. “Those traditional kites need to keep their form in order to carry their instrumentation,” says Erdim. By nature, kites do not want to be weighed down; rather they want to be light as possible in order to move freely in the wind. Erdim experimented with the instrumentation, reel, and line so that the kite does not carry anything extraneous. Erdim prefers to fly kites that are light in weight and to fly with as little wind possible.

There have been a variety of iterations, both acoustic and amplified, of singing kites that Erdim has designed, built, and tested. One that he keeps returning to is his wooden and rigid box frame “hurdy gurdy” style reel kite. Its design resonates better for soundings and as a result activates the participant. Nylon fishing line is used as the kite line and rosin is applied to create the resistance and texture needed to create the sound resonance. By turning the kite reel, an engagement occurs among atmosphere, kite, and participant. “Air is rich with texture,” says Erdim. “It is not like a wind chime, where the sound is independent and non-participatory.” As the kite line moves through the sky, it

Listen to Kite Choir in action
at Lake MacBride State Park
vimeo.com/showcase/6228447



gently glides across a series of piano wires that vibrate and resonate to create the soundings for Kite Choir.

The soundings created by Kite Choir are unlike a traditionally scored piece of music in which the composer is in control. Kite Choir is meant to be a collaboration with the sky. “Your agency of expression is limited,” says Erdim. “The kite takes its form from the wind and it is a creature or spirit that is brought to life by the wind.” Kite Choir is an ensemble of participant, kite, and nature.

Top: Firat Erdim demonstrates one of the acoustic iterations of his “hurdy gurdy” style singing kites.



DECONSTRUCTED AMERICANA

Iowa Artist Fellowship recipient Levi Robb, AIA, heavily engages material culture to create influential art.

WORDS : BRENT HOFFMAN, ASSOC. AIA IMAGES : LEVI ROBB

The reality of today's American consumer experience for many is one of convenience, one-click shopping, endless choices, and catered advertising. We can have items shipped to our homes within a few days or picked up at a store in a matter of hours. These products are heavily packaged in a variety of materials and in various forms. Once the products are opened, the consumer tosses the packaging into the trash without any real additional thought. For multidisciplinary artist Levi Robb, AIA, the recording of these material "artifacts" by unconventional means and methods, has been an influential driver in the development of his studio practice.

As a young child growing up in rural eastern Iowa, Robb knew he wanted to explore a field related to design. His mother was a commercial graphic artist who encouraged him to work on projects using the same variety of mediums she used. "She was always doing pen-and-ink drawings, snipping, collaging, copying and that sort of thing," says Robb. "This was my original peek into the artist side of things and wanting to do something in design."

Robb's influence comes from several jobs he has worked in the past from a garbage collector, to a highway road-painting crew, to a sign painter. As well as his childhood experiences playing in junkyards and constantly viewing the no longer usable materials that were abundant. His work uses unconventional printmaking methods to capture the spatial conditions of these types of environments. With a mixture of ink and automotive oil, and sometimes grease, he rolls the ink-oil mixture on the old agrarian machinery and presses with paper to create these site-specific works on paper. Some prints and collages are a means of recording his observations and a log of his deconstructed thoughts and memories.

Robb's practice does not stick to a single medium. His drawings, prints, sculptures, castings, carvings, quick studies, site explorations, and installations all inform each other and are a part of a larger body of work that is a continual exploration into our material culture.

Robb currently works as an architect with BNIM in Des Moines where he contributes his unique perspective to architecture and the design dialog. He recently received an Iowa Artist Fellowship from the Iowa Arts Council and plans to continue to explore and investigate these discarded objects and materials in his studio practice.



Top: Levi Robb, AIA, works in his studio hand-carving graffiti for a wall piece. **Bottom:** Titled "3-IN-1" created in 2020 from cast acrylic, highway safety glass, rigid poplar frame, and hardware.



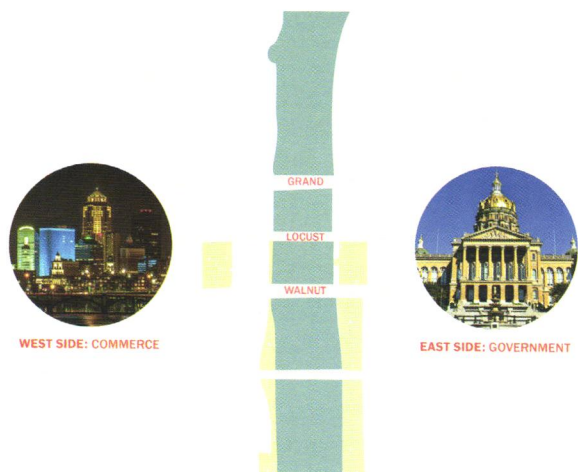
GRAND SPAN

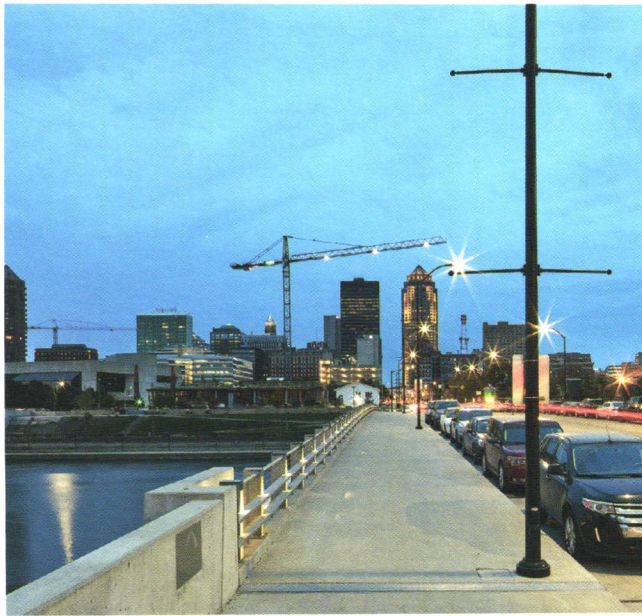
The newly completed Grand Avenue Bridge is the first of three to replace downtown's historic bridges across the Des Moines River.

WORDS : ANDREW GLEESON **IMAGES :** JEFF WAGNER, AIA, AND PAUL CROSBY
ARCHITECT : SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE

In the past, as I drove down the Grand Avenue Bridge, I would often steal a glance—in brief defiance of my driving duties—to see the rhythmic rows of low bridges as they traversed the Des Moines River, their arches like skipping stones hopping across the water's surface. This memory serves as a reminder that bridges are never merely practical, they are metaphors—literal and visual connectors of people.

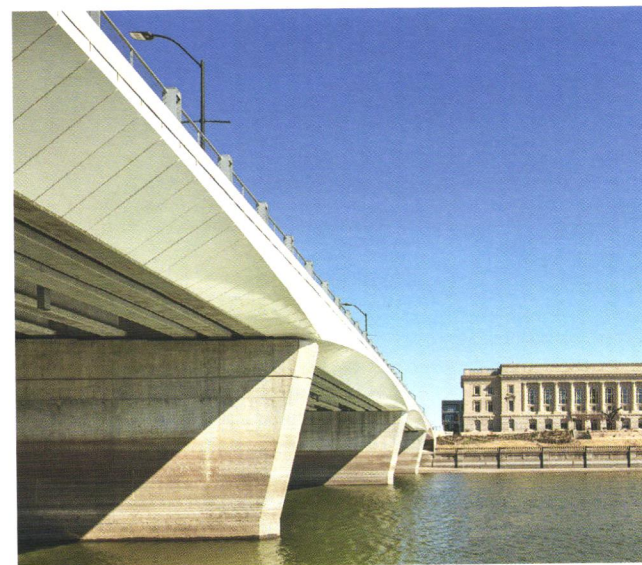
The citizens of Des Moines knew this when it was announced that the only cost-effective solution for the crumbling historic bridges spanning the Des Moines River was to replace them with standard concrete Department of Transportation bridges. The city rejected this proposal, an aesthetic steering committee





"These bridges symbolize the unity of the city otherwise divided."

— WALTER T. PROCTOR



was formed, and Substance Architecture was commissioned to collaborate with the structural engineers Shuck-Britson to elevate the standard bridges to a level commensurate with their potent civic status. Substance arrived at an external cladding approach that evokes the historic arched bridges while staying within budget (a true arched bridge would have been three times more expensive). The architectural retrofit required a ten-foot cantilevered edge modification on each side of the otherwise standard bridges.

To conceptualize the design of the cladding, Substance created a study model using folded paper to simulate bent steel panels. The bend of each panel in succession creates the shallow scalloped arches. But, as Todd Garner, AIA, Principal at Substance Architecture states, "what works with paper doesn't work with plate steel." Several fabrication studies were conducted to ensure precise folds in the steel. Once manufactured, the pieces were coated with a heavy-duty, water-resilient marine-grade paint, the same used on navy ships, painted white to match the nearby Women of Achievement pedestrian bridge. The finished arched cladding easily bends over the outwardly tapered concrete piers. Concealed LED lighting glows through thin open gaps between each panel. At night the gentle light dances in streaks over the water.

Beginning in 2016 and completed in 2018, the Grand Avenue Bridge was the first of the new crop. Using the same team and strategy, the Locust Street Bridge—after a long delay due to flooding—is near completion, and the Walnut Street Bridge is slated to begin in 2022. The City of Des Moines flag showcasing the bridges was readopted in 2019, due in part to the reintroduction of the symbolic arches. What often one would simply pass over now causes us to pause and appreciate the restoration of a historic symbol of the city.

Opposite Top: The first of three planned bridge replacements has reached completion. **Opposite Bottom:** The bridges play a big role in connecting the east side of the city of Des Moines to the west side. **Top:** The role of the bridges is multifaceted. In a literal sense it provides access across the river, but these bridges also serve as a space for the community to connect through events. **Middle:** The infamous arches were maintained as they are a symbol of the city. **Bottom:** Substance was able to deliver the arched bridge that the city has come to adore all while staying within budget.

on the boards

Projects
In Progress

Riverfront West

Shive-Hattery Architecture + Engineering has been working with local developers Steve Long and Kevin Kain from Riverfront West, LLC to design a mixed-use project along the Iowa River in Iowa City that will be constructed by DCI Group as part of a design-build partnership. This project provides active seniors the opportunity to live adjacent to the University of Iowa campus near the vibrant downtown as part of a diverse development of market-rate housing options, retail, and hospitality. Riverfront West takes advantage of the site's location to create a sense of place and connection to the surrounding neighborhood as well as a destination for the entire city.



Iowa City, Iowa

Shive-Hattery Architecture + Engineering



Des Moines University Medical & Health Sciences Campus

West Des Moines, Iowa

RDG Planning & Design

Des Moines University's new 88-acre campus establishes a premier destination for medical and health science education. RDG's master plan, programming, and design create technology-rich, flexible, and adaptable educational spaces that support innovative teaching methods and expand research activity and clinical services. Landscape design will transform the surrounding site into a restorative panorama of naturalized areas, innovative rainwater solutions, trails, and outdoor gathering spaces. Set against an ambitious timeline, construction is underway and the new campus is set to open in 2023.

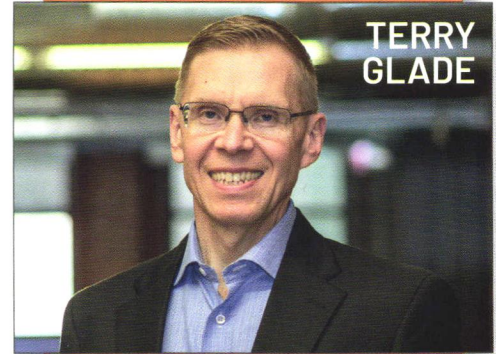


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ARCHITECTURE / ENGINEERING / INTERIORS

THIS PLACE

Creating a symbol for reflection.

WORDS : JAMES SPILLER, AIA IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO ARCHITECT : ASK STUDIO





We make the mistake of believing the photographer is documenting from an objective point of view. But this is not true at all. Running from landscape to landscape trying to capture ever-shifting light in the evening or at dawn, the light here changes too quickly, there is only enough time to document by instinct. In the end, nobody but cows will see this place in all possible light conditions.

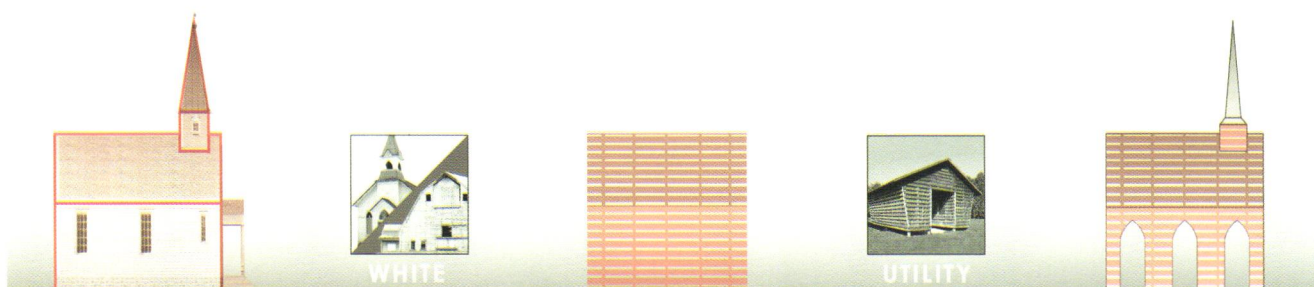
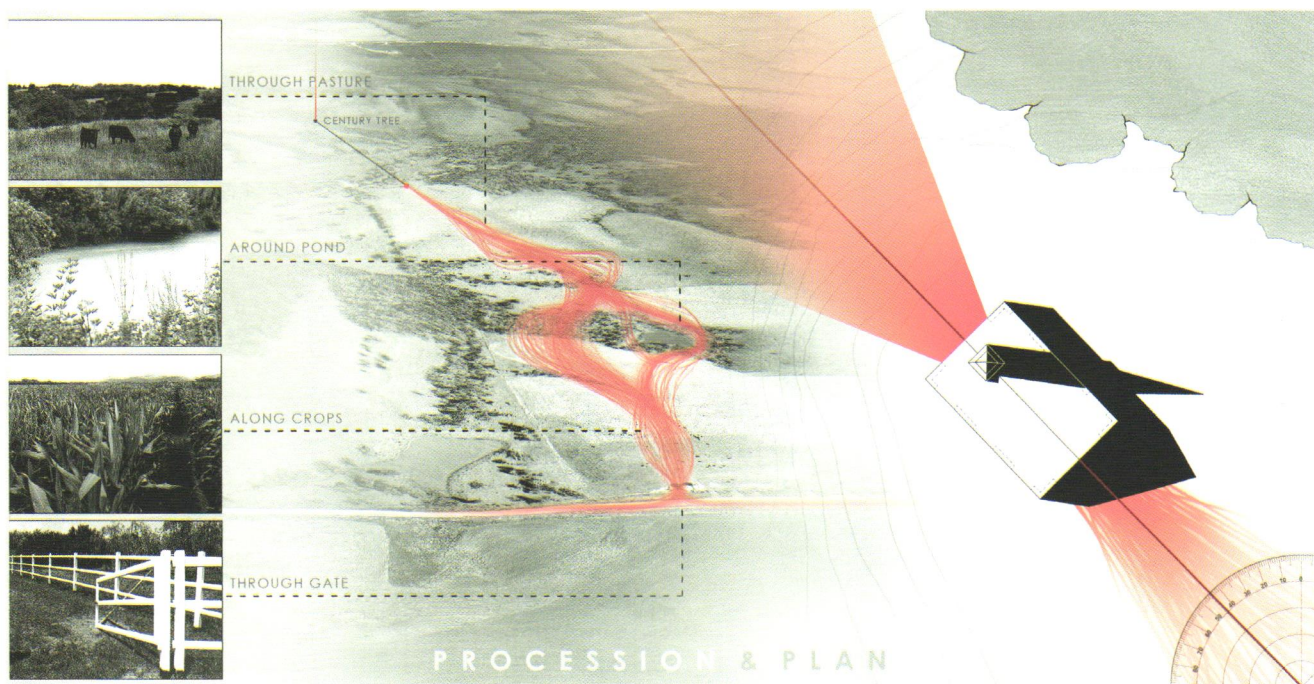
All things were atypical for this photo shoot. It began with the hum of interstate speed for over two hours, a ten-mile drive along gravel roads through rolling pastures and crop covered hills, and parking in a ditch. The only way in is to hike. The anticipation is immense once the gate opens and squeaks closed. Along the row crops, around a pond, through the pasture, climbing and descending hills, this is a destination.

It is also in the middle of a working farm, a busy operation. There are livestock, equipment, and farmhands. It is a place of work. Architect Brent Schipper, AIA, reflects: "This structure is so simple. Its whiteness and proportion give it great distinction. In the end, the owner was right, the white chapel is of this land." One can place their own symbolism to this space. It is non-denominational, but it is of a place, of a tradition. The owner clarifies: "We refer to it as a chapel. That name has stuck, even if it isn't a direct representation of that word. Here, it is understandable."

"It is a pavilion," the photographer, Cameron Campbell, AIA, states. "The walls are the scene beyond it." It is a one space project that breathes out into expansive territory. There was a moment of revelation in its imagining: should a beautiful place have doors and windows? Resoundingly, the answer is, "No."

There are no markers, pathways, or hints to or from this place. It stands alone. It is easy to romanticize, but this project began with a humble acknowledgment—this place is special. The owner outlines that "this has been a family farm since 1843. We were seeking something spiritual, something closer to the divine, a space for reflection." So, Schipper was invited to identify where a site for a structure should be. But the farm is large enough to quickly become lost. There are wooded areas, there are grazing fields, and there are hills. "There was a huge tree above the creek, a century tree," Schipper recalls, "and if I could find the tree, I could locate myself. When we climbed the hill, which became the site of the Chapel, we were opposite and yet connected." The architecture is finely tuned to

Opposite: The Ullem Chapel stands as a stoic symbol of this place. A place to revel in the beauty of this century farm.



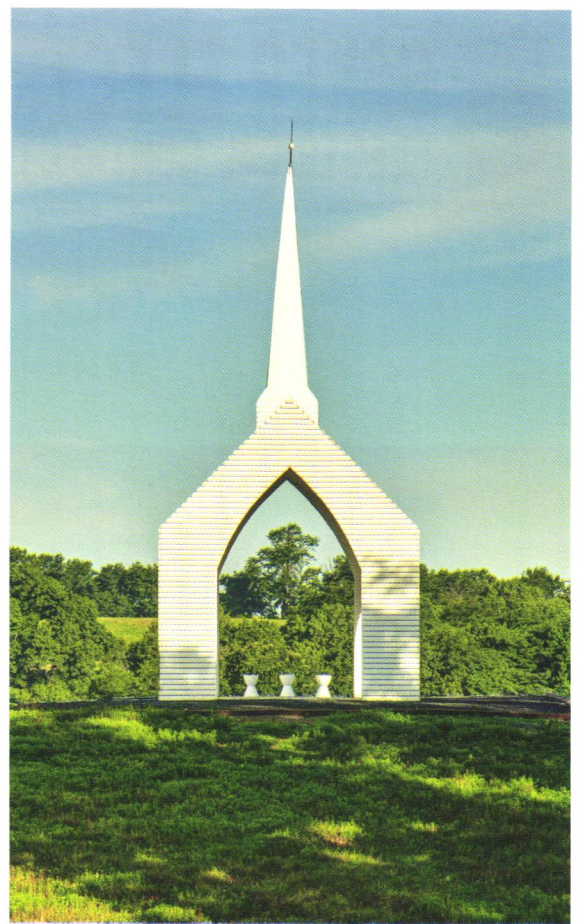
the varying distances one engages this place.

From the gate, the structure is on hill a half mile walk through mud and crop. There are no utilities, and it is very difficult for access and constructability. The owner recalls: "Instead of pondering all the problems, from the moment Brent arrived, he authentically said, 'I can't believe this spot.' The architect was as inspired as I was."

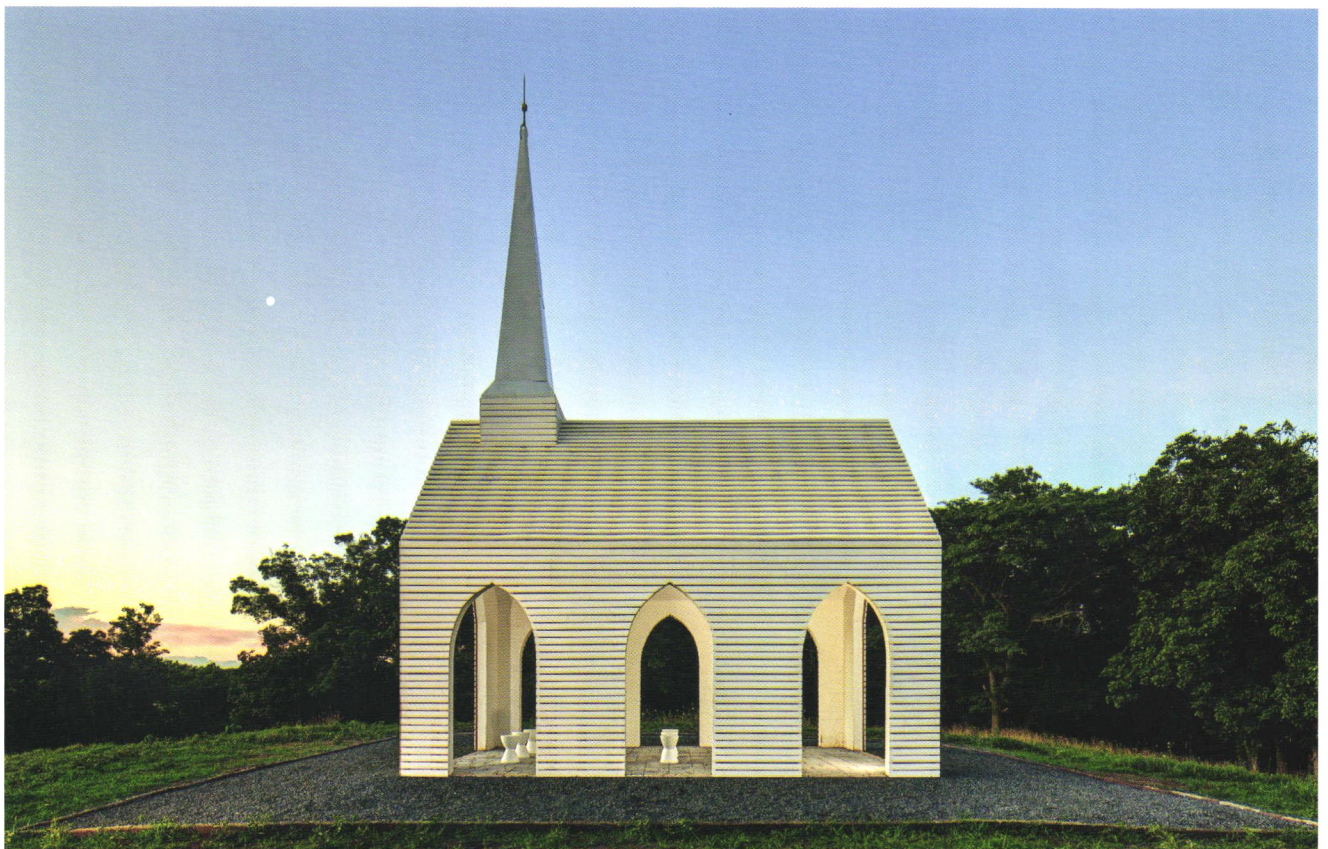
"It was like ions and molecules," the owner admits. "Sometimes we were aligned, other times we weren't even close. At a few times, it felt like we should just give up. We could cook up an amazing concept, but who would build it?" Pole barns and corn cribs make up the majority of construction in this area, and a local craftsman was found by word of mouth. This is a hard site with high winds, volatility in temperatures, and exposed conditions. Materials were identified that everyone agreed to be suitable, but weren't readily available. It was determined that source must be the local lumber yard, and the remote nature of the site required the assembly of deployable, simple materials. Readily available, made to last, and the cost-effective standard production color of white became integral to the design strategy. If the design was to

be vernacular, it needed to be embraced. The shell is inspired by the familiar corn crib, but for the chapel the shell is wall and roof, bringing cleanliness to the chapel's form. The gothic arches are deletions, breaking the form with simple rhythm. The result is not pure, but the overlaid geometry holds it together succinctly. The chapel is at once familiar but distinct. It is a study in proportion and contrast. "The chapel in this land is magical," the owner summarizes. "It starts with Grant Wood landscapes—there are crops, season depending, beautiful Angus cattle, livestock, topography, and the environment. It is where nature meets agriculture, meets divinity. It makes my spine shiver." Schipper chuckles. "Even the photographer, at arrival—you could hear the camera immediately begin clicking."

The chapel is not roadside architecture; it is the opposite. It is hidden, a quiet reminder of this place, a frame for contemplation. Schipper illuminates. "When we arrived at the site, a hill, we arrived by moving up the hill from the creek. It was an epiphany of sorts. The drama of emerging from the valley. And we spoke the words: "This is it."



Opposite: The shell is inspired by the familiar corn crib, but for the chapel the shell is wall and roof, bringing cleanliness to the chapel's form. **Top Left:** The site of the chapel is vital to its story. A private space for the owner to enjoy. **Top Right:** The absence of doors and windows was a consensus from all parties involved. The space needed to be one with its environment. **Bottom:** The materials became integral to the design strategy. The use of Iowa lumber and the standard production of white were necessary to ensure completion.



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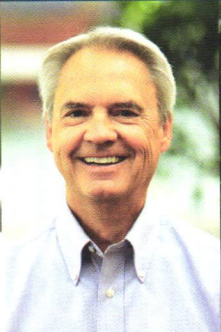
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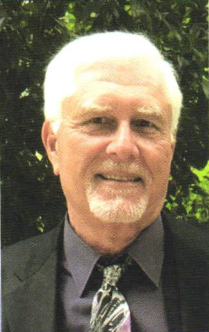
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CENTER STAGE



FLEX & FLEXIBILITY

Community wellness center realizes a 20-year vision in Mount Vernon.

WORDS : JUSTIN BURNHAM, ASSOC. AIA

IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO

ARCHITECT : OPN ARCHITECTS

What's in a name? Mount Vernon is home to not just a wellness center but a community wellness center: with emphasis on the community.

As a public destination, this building accommodates an assortment of routines. Situated across from the town's K-12 campus, kids regularly arrive after school to burn pent up energy. Club and tournament offerings are a chance to hone their skills. Working adults, with habits ranging from dedicated to casual, can arrive before dawn or after dusk. And there is a coffee crowd—you read that right—as there is a café with spacious seating inside and out. For young, old, and in between, the Lester Buresh Family Community Wellness Center is not only a place to work out: it can be a place to bring a laptop to work from or a place to do not much at all.

Being open to the public is one thing, but being tailored to a community is another kind of test. To do so, OPN Architects engaged with Mount Vernon's City Manager Chris Nosbich, and Parks and Recreation Director Matt Siders, to listen to residents and study existing amenities. A community with simple needs and a quirky core revealed itself.

Stakeholders shared the view that a flexible amenity—geared toward all ages and with programs like those in adjacent metro areas—would be critical to sustaining the current population and attracting new residents. While the town is home to a liberal arts college, Cornell College, those facilities directly serve students and faculty. In Mount Vernon, there were health clubs but there was not a gymnasium for public use.



Opposite: The design takes advantage of the site by nestling the gymnasium into the raised topography along the south to create a protected courtyard at the east and an entry plaza to the north. **Top Right:** The wellness center brings modern facilities to a convenient location for the community to take advantage of. **Bottom:** The cross-axial entry is bracketed by a feature wall and stair that connects the two levels of the circulation spine.



Justin Bishop, AIA, Associate Principal for OPN architects, likes to point to synergies. For example, while fitness takes the lead, there is also a multi-purpose space that can be rented for birthday parties. Put another way, some of the program would be typical of a public library: such as a community room. “That to me is the difference between a wellness center and a community center, and I think this is much more geared toward serving the community beyond just typical wellness or fitness aspects,” he explains.

The project was primarily funded with a sales tax vote, dating back to 1999, which raised \$6.5 million. An additional \$1.5 million received in donations surpassed expectations. The donors are recognized on a feature-wall near the reception desk, and the building bears the name of the late Lester Buresh (a banker and long-term resident of Mount Vernon) whose brother Ernie made a significant donation in his memory.

According to Bishop: “Some of the fundraising and large gifts the committee received enabled them to enhance the program and equipment.” Examples include: an interactive exercise mat (iRoom), an outdoor butterfly garden, and a turf room. The turf room includes nets to aid year-round batting and pitching—as baseball and softball teams are well-developed in Mount Vernon—but adapts for soccer as well.

On the flip side, Bishop notes: “While it was very convenient to have synergies with the schools, we were also very conscious of the rest of the community and how it could engage at multiple levels.” Being flexible and adaptable was a driver of success.

Simple Diagram—See & Be Seen

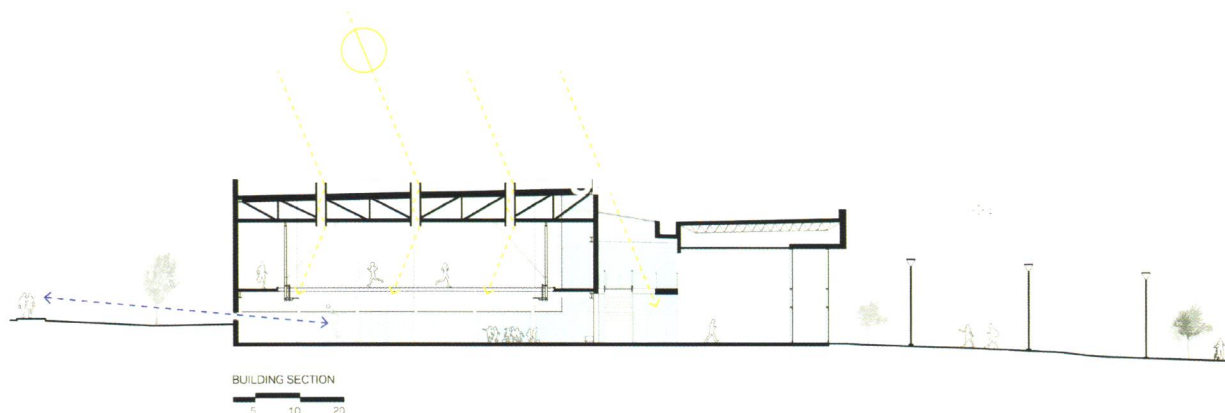
The massing is simply two slightly offset bars nestled into the hillside. The double-story gymnasium fronts a busy street. Entry, parking, and support functions are situated on the opposite side. Despite the gentle slope, the two bars appear to sit atop a flat plinth with retaining walls that form a courtyard to the east, which opens onto a paved entry plaza to the north: public spaces.

The building is planned around movement. “We wanted the activity to ‘see and be seen,’ so anywhere there would possibly be activity we wanted to highlight that,” says Justin Bishop, AIA. “We only put glass where we wanted the views.”

The gymnasium and circulation are prime examples of this concept. The two short ends of the gym have glass from floor to door head height. Lengthwise, a small strip window gives the building a light appearance and greater visual connectivity to the ground level. Above, windows serve the running track by being placed at the end of straightaways.

“We approached every decision trying to be thoughtful and efficient.” For example, Bishop explains thinking behind the solid walls as follows: “The precast panels have variegated texture, but we only have three panel types: it looks more unique and sporadic.”

The main stair is visible from the north entrance. It connects to strength and cardio areas at the upper level. The reception desk has a line of sight to the main corridor. Skylights above the stair





and climbing wall draw daylight into these middle spaces, which reduces the need for artificial lighting. The gymnasium roof includes light tubes; similarly, to reduce energy costs.

Bishop appreciates that, “The city was very practical in their approach; they are very value-driven and view it through the lens of maintenance and operation. Our continual challenge was to simplify and edit. The cleaner it got the more functional and cost effective it was, too. That’s the benefit of doing that simple diagram.”

Smart material decisions also aided these practical stakeholders. Inside polished concrete floors and concrete block walls eschew the upkeep of carpet and paint. Outside, the trio of precast concrete, glass, and brick durably resist weathering. The building is open 24/7 with card access, so durability and security (passive and active) are baked into the design.

One meaning of the word ‘flex’ is to flaunt: especially in contemporary social media context. Though Mount Vernon does not seem like a boastful community, they deserve to be proud of what they built—seemingly they are—because the facility is attractive aesthetically and strategically. Things in Mount Vernon looked very different 20 years ago; no doubt, things will look very different in another 20 years. At its root, the approach to Lester Buresh Family Community Wellness Center is a model for lasting flexibility.

Opposite: Three materials define the building’s exterior palette: precast concrete, glass, and brick. Concrete and brick define the solid mass of the two bars and are strategically cut away at locations to frame visual connections to track corners, reveal activity within, and allow translucent volumes to float. **Top:** This multi-purpose community wellness center also serves as a formal and informal gathering space. **Bottom:** Community areas flow throughout the space and into the courtyards.





All the World's a Stage

An elegant canopy enriches the “sidewalk ballet.”

WORDS: GRANT NORDBY, AIA **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT:** NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

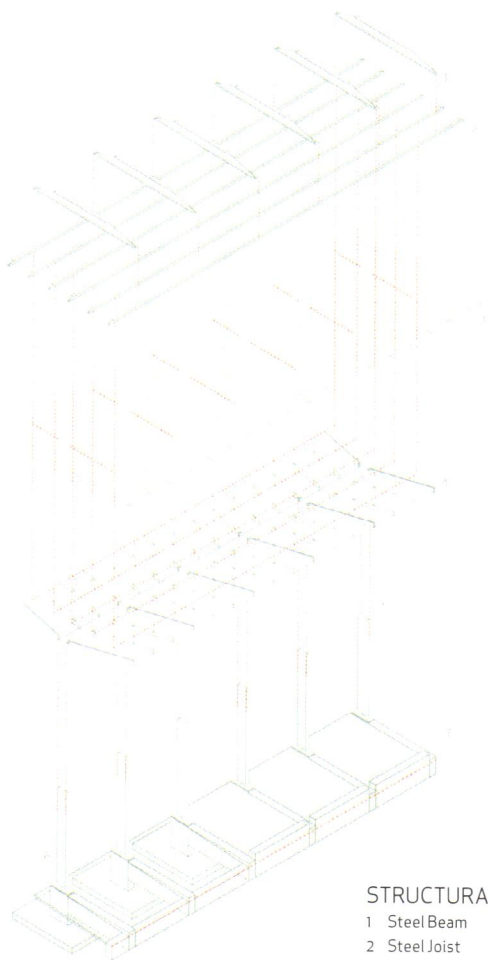
You might say it began with a small niche off the “Ped” Mall. After nearly 40 years of increasingly vibrant use, Iowa City’s popular pedestrian mall was to get a facelift in the form of a third round of pedestrian streetscape improvements. Its centerpiece: a permanent outdoor performance structure carved from the busy sidewalk. The City of Iowa City commissioned Neumann Monson Architects—whose office overlooks the Ped Mall—to design the stage.

Continual reinvestment in the Ped Mall is daily justified by a lively 24/7 procession of pedestrians: students, shoppers, game-day visitors, parents with children, and people-watching retirees together fill Shakespeare’s “many parts” played on the stage of life. People come because there is something to do and see at any time of day—in a density at which each activity ramifies the others—borrowing a term from urbanist Jane Jacobs. As she taught, “People gathered in concentrations ... are the source of immense vitality, and because they ... represent, in small geographic compass, a great and exuberant richness of differences and possibilities, many of these ... [are] unique and unpredictable.” This ecological theory of pedestrian life explains why diverse uses flourished again in post-1980 downtown Iowa City while other urban cores in Iowa declined and disinvested, their lifeforce dissipating to suburbs. The

Ped Mall’s novelty is heightened by contrast. It is a teeming jungle of vibrant diversity, with niches for specialized uses that would wither anywhere else. Performers—scheduled or spontaneous—have long found it essential. Out-of-town visitors, too, are drawn to its density and novelty; lonely moths lured to the stage’s limelight.

The stage’s exposure in this hyper-local urban setting calls for flawless performance. As designer Bob Gassman, Assoc. AIA, explains: “There’s no room for error.” The elegant structure is carved from a widened patch of sidewalk at the entrance to the Sheraton (now Graduate) hotel, which has occupied the southern terminus of the Ped Mall since 1984. The actual stage surface—which doubles as an occupiable sidewalk between performances—covers just 700 square feet: about the size of a University of Iowa dorm room. Just six balletic steel columns touch the ground, downspouts, and conduits routed between flanges.

Overhead “air rights” and underground roots are much larger—grade beams counter-balancing the cantilevered canopy. Foot traffic to and from the hotel entrance flows just beside the stage, but designers extended the translucent glass canopy and white-painted steel *brise soleil* to encompass this entrance, enhancing their combined visual presence and anchoring the view from Dubuque



STRUCTURAL ASSEMBLY

- 1 Steel Beam
- 2 Steel Joist
- 3 Aluminum Louvers
- 4 Glazing System
- 5 Steel Column
- 6 Foundation
- 7 Performance Stage

Street. The smooth, luminous underside of glass is overhung by the brise soleil above, which attenuates nighttime up-lighting for hotel windows, while also catching and modulating daytime sunlight. Substantial cantilevered beams are veiled from at-grade observers by the delicate light-catching layers, leaving an impression of ethereality. Water shedding, sun shading, stage lighting and audio infrastructure are all integrated into a unified whole, giving aesthetic repose at the heart of the visually chaotic urban core. In Gassman's words, all is "clean and light," democratically elevating the pedestrian to performance art.

Opposite: Water shedding, sun shading, stage lighting, and audio infrastructure are all integrated into a unified whole, giving aesthetic repose at the heart of the visually chaotic urban core. **Top Left:** The actual stage surface—which doubles as an occupiable sidewalk between performances—covers just 700 square feet: about the size of a University of Iowa dorm room. Just six balletic steel columns touch the ground, downspouts and conduits routed between flanges. **Top Right:** The smooth, luminous underside of glass is overhung by the brise soleil above, which attenuates night-time up-lighting for hotel windows, while also catching and modulating daytime sunlight. **Bottom:** The Ped Mall's centerpiece; a permanent outdoor performance structure carved from the busy sidewalk.



MORE OUTDOORS, PLEASE

Creating community without walls.

WORDS : KELLY ROBERSON **IMAGES :** ALEX MICHL, ASSOC. AIA, OPN ARCHITECTS **ARCHITECT :** OPN ARCHITECTS

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, much about the outdoors had already captured the imagination of the public. From parks to concert venues, more and more of the ways and reasons we recreated and gathered had already moved to spaces beyond the traditional boundaries of architecture. The year 2020, and into 2021, pushed that transition into high gear: From restaurants to weddings, if we could do it outside, we did it outside (even if it meant huddling around a heater).

So it's fortuitous indeed that the elegant restraint of the Jamie Hurd Amphitheater in West Des Moines, finished in 2020, offers yet another outdoor spot for religious services, concerts, weddings, graduations, or just simply quiet. Located as part of the city's campus, which includes public-facing buildings like the West Des Moines City Hall and the West Des Moines Public Library, the amphitheater sits at the edge of a small pond. It's a site with a natural topography that lends itself easily to the venue. "The city had always planned on some sort of public venue at this location that allowed community events like festivals and movies," says Joe Wallace, AIA, with OPN Architects.

The project is named after Jamie Hurd, 29, who died after a battle with Hodgkin's lymphoma; her parents Richard and Linda donated the bulk of the \$2.4 million project funds. Its focal point is the amphitheater structure, a cantilevered steel truss that mimics the folds on a piece of paper and also recalls roof lines and materiality

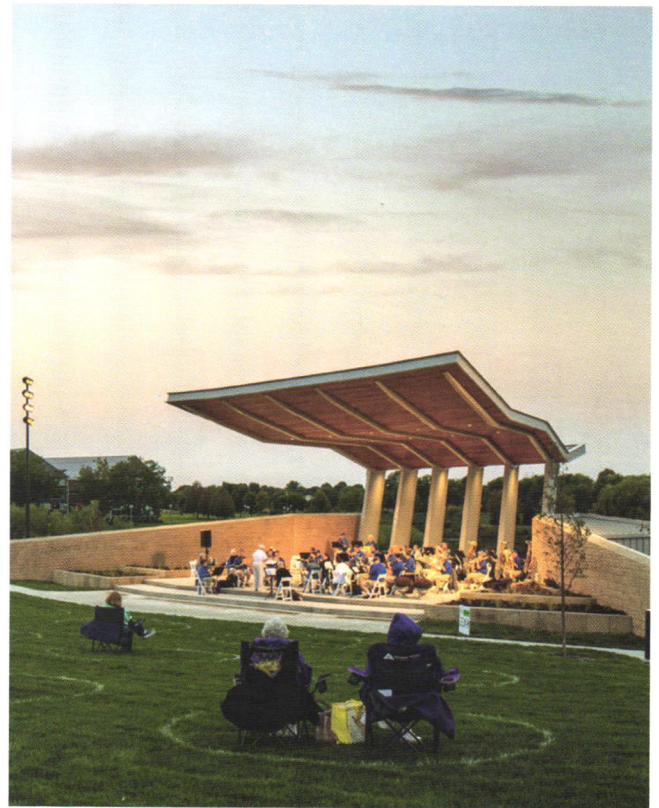
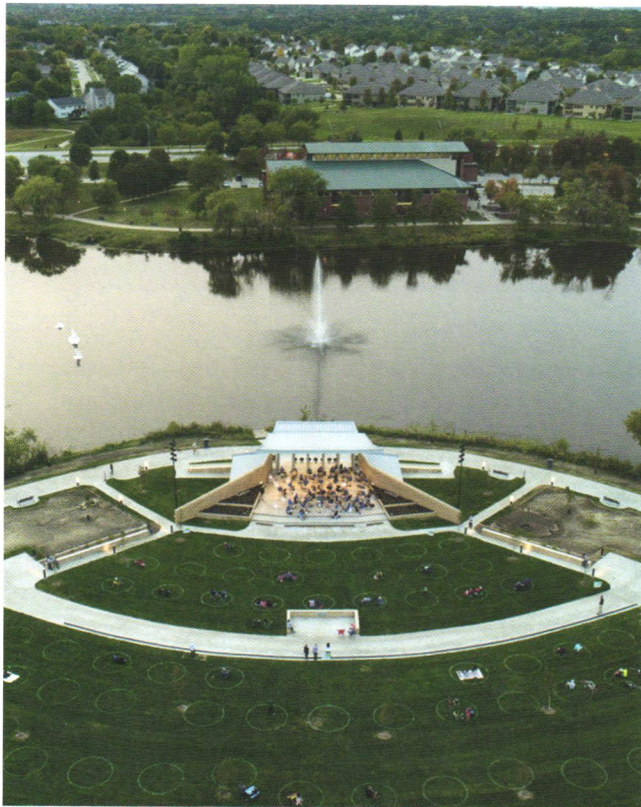
of nearby buildings. The truss system, says Wallace, capitalized on fabrication efficiencies: Each one is exactly the same. Natural wood soffits will also age well to blend with the surrounding landscape; the takeaway is a structure that's both sculptural and functional.

The conundrum, of course, is the structure itself: How do you create an outdoor "building" that can help guide acoustics in a way that's respectful of the surrounding area but maximizes the experience for attendees? OPN consulted with acoustics experts, ensuring that sound would focus up and down toward the hill, "softening into the hill itself versus going all over the place," Wallace says. "We wanted to make sure to have as little impact acoustically on the community and park as we could."

Complementary pieces of the site, which can seat up to 3,000, include cast-in-place concrete walls to hide stage support and AV spaces for everything from spoken word to fine art events as well as local acts. It's already gotten a workout, and the city is very much looking forward to more events and more accessibility, as well as rental options for the wider community. There will also be a future permanent art installation that further ties the site together into a cohesive campus.

"Providing another outdoor amenity will be really beneficial to the community," says Wallace. "We're all really proud of our collaboration and the finished amphitheater, that we were able to accomplish all the goals we set out at the beginning of the project."





Opposite: The Amphitheater offers a community-based cultural space, bringing people together to share musical performances and creative showcases including concerts, movies, and festivals. **Top:** The design incorporates materials and forms from the adjacent building on the City Campus to create an performance space that is both airy and grounded. **Bottom Left:** The stage accommodates up to 55 musicians with lawn seating for up to 2,000 spectators. **Bottom Right:** The focal point is the amphitheater structure, a cantilevered steel truss that mimics the folds on a piece of paper and also recalls roof lines and materiality of nearby buildings.



AFFABLE OVERLOOK

AKAR Architecture plunks a weekend cabin high above the mighty Mississippi.

WORDS : ANDREW BALLARD, AIA
IMAGES : SANJAY JANI, AIA
ARCHITECT : AKAR ARCHITECTURE

This 1,600-sf weekend retreat in McGregor, Iowa, toes the line between cabin and treehouse. It perches aside the Mississippi River's highest bluff, eye level with a monumental grain elevator rooted in the bank below.

The clients, Paul and Joan Burns, represent only the latest wave of settlers. The river valley, which encapsulates a best-of-both-worlds transition between eastern forests and the central prairie, has attracted human inhabitation for centuries. The landscape is a conflux of the inexorable; a palimpsest of geological and historical heritage blanketed with state and federal protection and scored by settlement and commerce.

Prairie du Chien hugs the Mississippi's far bank some mile and a half to the east. Downtown McGregor, with little that's changed from its 1800's shipping heyday, is a stone's throw to the west. Upslope is Pikes Peak State Park, flagged in 1803 as an ideal spot for U.S. fortification. Upriver is Effigy Mounds National Monument, a sacred collection of animal-shaped earth forms with ties to twenty Native American tribes. Downriver is the spot where two Frenchmen reached the Mississippi from the Wisconsin in



1673, absorbing lessons about the land and its people that would enable their exploitation thereafter.

The Peak's current tranquility belies the area's storied past, and it was this aspect that drew Paul and Joan from Iowa City, two hours south. They initially intended the cabin as a weekend getaway, and recently it has proven capable as an extended stay Covid-era live/work unit. The couple knew the work of AKAR Architecture and Design through friends and trusted principal Sanjay Jani's guidance. "They are the perfect clients," nods Jani. "They came with a love of the site, dreams of a cozy getaway, and no fixed expectations as to how all that would come together."

However, site constraints were abundant. Steep topography, existing retaining walls, and site circulation restricted the buildable area to an 18-foot-wide strip. The design responds with a modified A-frame conceit. Lopping the top allows the building's three-floor stack to slide under the required 34-foot height limit. A cantilevered master suite on the third floor interlocks the primary shell, resulting in a loose composition reminiscent of Rudolf Schindler's hillside houses.

The cabin wields a fair bit of steel at these acrobatics. Incongruity between stature and structure reinforces the building's cuddly charm, as does the collection of low-maintenance exterior materials that gesture to the grain elevator's most workmanlike aesthetics.

Decorum dwells within. The interior is more refined, with a modern palette of clean lines and straight grains. Windows capture selective views, tactfully averting one's gaze from the grain elevator's curvy figure. The living area tracks views of the river amidst the foliage. Above, the master suite and screen porch widen the building's aperture to more fully access the panorama's impressive breadth.

The cabin is a friendly outpost in this epic saga of a site, claiming the cute quirkiness that is its typology's birthright. AKAR Architecture embraced the challenges and history of this little corner of the world to deliver a destination for their clients; an eccentric retreat that all who pass can appreciate.



Opposite: Low-maintenance exterior materials speak generally to the agricultural landscape of Iowa and directly to the riverside grain elevator visible from site. **Top Left:** Structural cross bracing, beams and columns are strategically exposed to compose, define, and embellish interior spaces. **Top Right:** River views, site topography, existing retaining walls, and a path to an existing overlook gazebo restricted the buildable area to an 18-foot-wide strip of land hugging the border of steeply sloped Pikes Peak State Park. **Bottom Right:** The interior is more refined, with a modern palette of clean lines and straight grains.

A MOST CONGENIAL HOST

Substance Architecture translates a lakeside plot into a memorable retreat.

WORDS : ANDREW BALLARD, AIA

IMAGES : COREY GAFFER

ARCHITECT : SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE

A lake house is a special kind of place. A private retreat, it is reassuringly accessible year round but really comes to life in summer, when water-skis and frisbees come out of the closet. For younger folk, the main draw might be the excitement of watercraft and lawn games. The older crowd might prefer kicking back on the deck with drink in hand as the coolness of evening descends, using fresh air and good company to shed the vicissitudes of everyday life.

“Going to the lake” is a tradition that this house gracefully embraces and expands upon. The Lakeshore House is a destination and a gathering venue with enough formality to have a presence but with tie off, sleeves rolled up, top button undone.

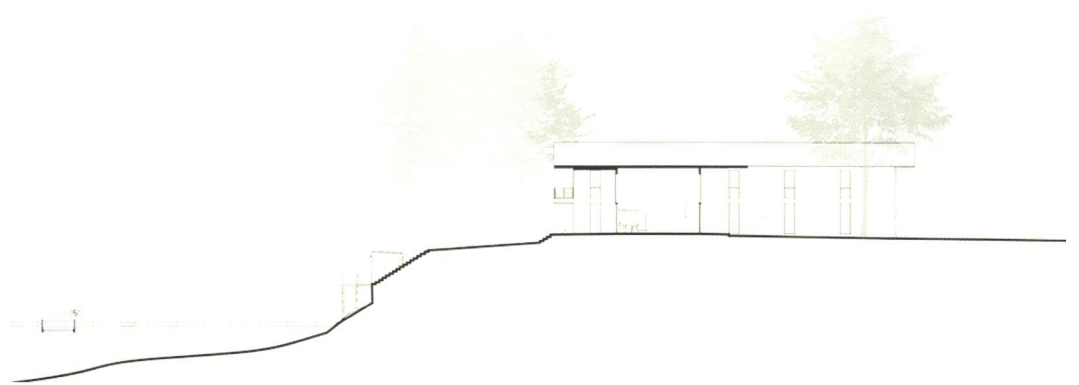
The house’s accessibility reflects the down to earth, congenial characters of its owners, Bob and Jane Sturgeon. The Sturgeons had long spent summers at the lake; biking, boating, entertaining, and relaxing. With retirement, they sought to continue their summer tradition in a home large enough to share with a growing circle of friends and family. The house acts as a welcoming magnet for all the kids, grandkids, and great grandkids that they are usually bouncing among.

The property attests to Bob and Jane’s top priorities: optimize open space, protect old growth trees, tame the landscape, provide ample guest space, and imbue a casual atmosphere focusing on the lake’s natural beauty.

West Lake Okoboji is the largest and deepest in a chain of five connecting glacial lakes. Subterranean springs provide exceptional water quality and a cool, clear, blue color. The lake is a precious natural resource, especially in our land-locked state.

This particular spot on Lake Okoboji is an accommodating host. The house’s conceptual diagram is a direct response to the existing site conditions and confirmation that, when thoughtfully





Opposite Top: The house acts as a welcoming magnet for all the kids, grandkids, and great grandkids that its owners are usually bouncing among.

Opposite Bottom: This project takes advantage of the lot's unusual width to separate the program and frame to create a rare clear view to the water through the house's heart. **Above:** The house's conceptual diagram is a direct response to the existing site conditions and confirmation that, when thoughtfully assembled, built form and landscape can create meaningful and memorable places.



assembled, built form and landscape can create meaningful and memorable places.

The house's ground floor rests about 25 feet higher than the water. Where wake once lapped a steep and eroding bank, steps now cascade through a series of granite-clad retaining walls softened by a native planting.

When the owners bought the property, a double-width lot, it was home to a detached garage at the street and a bungalow nestled back into a stand of old-growth bur oaks. Once removed, the bare footprints of both structures guided the new house's L-shaped floor plan, with a large forecourt to the street and an open, terraced expanse to the water. The towering bur oaks mitigate the north wing's substantial size.

Local homeowners typically max out their lakeside exposure by building as close to the full width of the property as possible, eclipsing views of the lake from the road. The project takes a different stance, framing a clear view to the water through the heart of the house. The urban gesture establishes an immediate connection to the lake for arriving guests and capitalizes on the special potency of the interstitial; of spaces between forms.

Bob and Jane are often out on the lake when the guests arrive, and the project handily navigates guests from the street to come join them. Visitors stroll along the forecourt into the great room, descend from the terrace, and saunter (or sprint, depending on age) down the lake path.

The house interlocks its site's constellation of trees in the form of two accoya-clad wings linked by a glass-walled great room. A broad single-slope roof spans the ensemble, rising from the single-story master suite wing on the south side up over the two-story guest, entertaining, and service wing on the north. Exposed Douglas fir rafter pairs and purlins extend generous overhangs in each direction.

The master suite, right-sized by the low eave and entry forecourt enjoys prime lake views and direct access to the terrace's southern end. Across the great room, the northern wing contains the bulk of the house's program. Its volume extends east, toward the street. The upper level is dedicated to guest accommodations and entertaining, with a loft bar area and three bedroom suites. A series of paired floor-to-ceiling windows on the north and south provide northern light on one side and views to the open forecourt on the other.

The project's natural palette emphasizes the sequential progression from street to the lake. "Major material elements carry through the sequence—from the front forecourt, through the great room and onto the rear terrace," describes Jessica Terrill, AIA, of Substance Architecture. The granite pavement at the roadside entry emerges as a 30-inch-tall plinth at the lakeside terrace; a subtle negotiation with sloping grade that allows the project to waive the experiential encumbrances of guardrails. "The weathered wood walls, granite floors, and Douglas fir roof structure are continuous from outside in to extend the outside space through the center of the home. Accoya was chosen specifically because it was available in a pre-weathered finish—allowing that material to be consistent inside and out," says Terrill.

One could be excused for thinking that the house—and by extension, this article—basically built itself (you'd be right about the article part). Good design often feels inevitable. Substance Architecture understood Bob and Jane as people, appreciated the assets and deficits of their existing site, and grasped the lake's social and psychological value. Those parameters, as clear as Okoboji's water, translate into a deceptively simple set of forms. The magic is in the nuance of how those forms and their inseparable landscape choreograph experience and accumulate memories visit after visit, year after year.



Opposite: Exposed Douglas fir rafter pairs and purlins extend generous overhangs in each direction. **Above:** The upper level is dedicated to guest accommodations and entertaining, with a loft bar area and three bedroom suites. **Right:** The weathered wood walls, granite floors, and Douglas fir roof structure are continuous from outside in to extend the outside space through the center of the home. **Bottom:** The house interlocks its site's constellation of trees in the form of two accoya-clad wings linked by a glass-walled great room.



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EXPLORATION

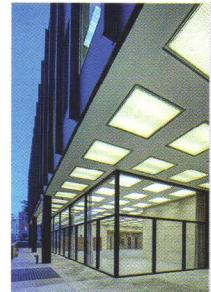
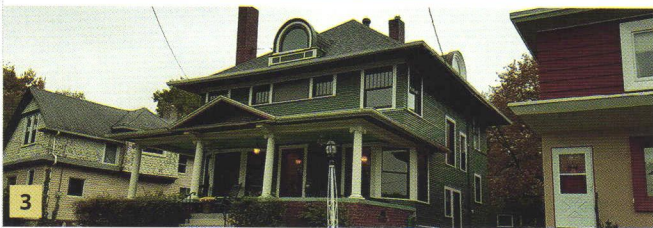
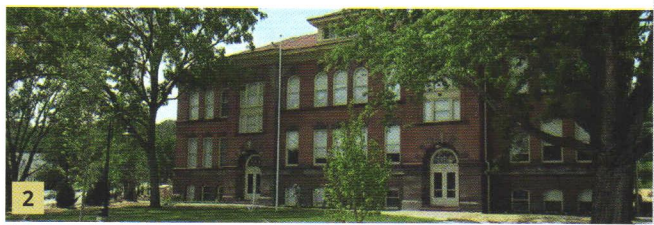
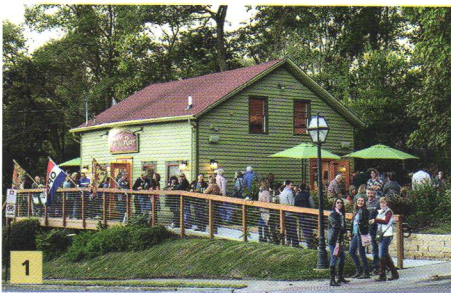
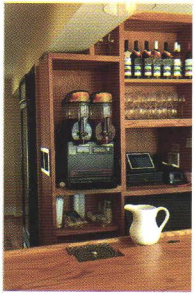


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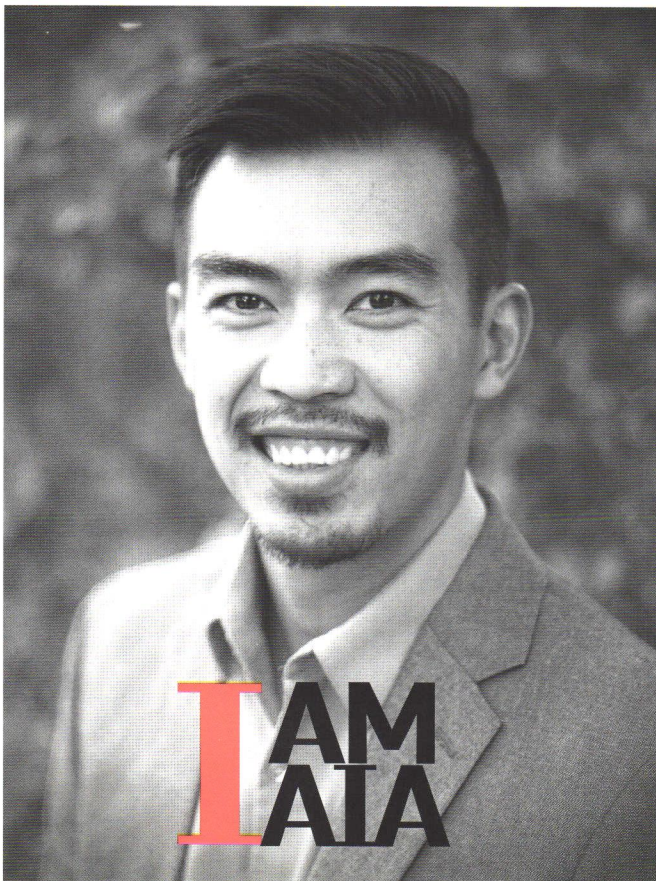
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"I had the opportunity to volunteer for AIA Iowa's Architecture Month and Annual Convention, and materials from those events have been sitting on my desk since.

They are reminders of how we can so effectively and brilliantly collaborate when we all share a common mission.

The spirit of collaboration that resulted in these efforts allowed me to feel a sense of pride and honor."

-Hoang Tran, AIA

project credits

Features

This Place | 14

Location: Moravia, IA

Architect: ASK Studio

Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

Flex & Flexibility | 20

Location: Mount Vernon, IA

Architect: OPN Architects

Contractor: Garling Construction

MEPT Engineer: Design Engineers

Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

All the World's a Stage | 24

Location: Iowa City, IA

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects

Landscape Architect: Genus Landscape Architects

Lighting Design: Schuler Shook

Contractor: Portzen Construction

Civil Engineer: Shoemaker & Haaland

MEP Engineer: SRF Consulting Group

Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

More Outdoors, Please | 26

Location: West Des Moines, IA

Architect: OPN Architects

Acoustical Engineer: Acoustics By Design

Civil Engineer: Larson Engineering

Contractor: Henkel Construction

MEPT Engineer: MODUS

Photographer: Alex Michl, Assoc. AIA, OPN Architects

Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Survey + Programming: McClure Engineering

Affable Overlook | 28

Location: McGregor, IA

Architect: AKAR Architecture

Contractor: Denning Construction LLC

Structural Engineer: Shoemaker & Haaland Pro Engineers

Photographer: Sanjay Jani, AIA

A Most Congenial Host | 30

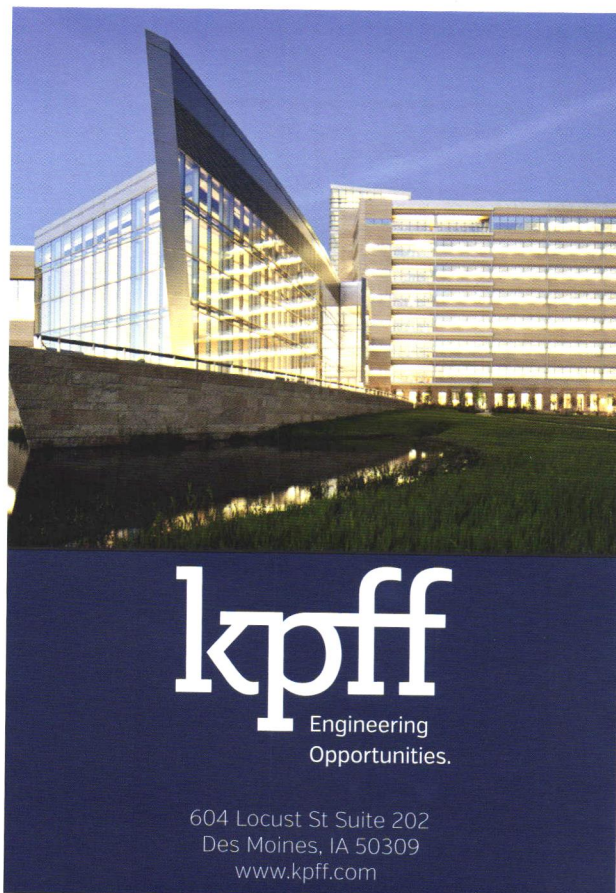
Location: Okoboji, IA

Architect: Substance Architecture

Contractor: Bates Construction

Landscape Architect: Genus Landscape Architects

Photographer: Corey Gaffer



Lester Buersh Community
Wellness Center
Mount Vernon, Iowa



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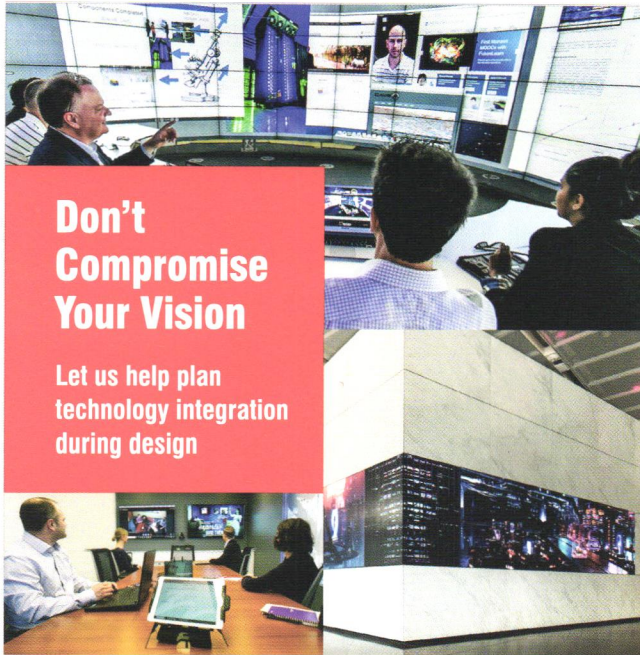
This past year has been tough. As we look ahead to brighter days, your local Pigott team is here with solutions to help elevate any space. From office to outdoor retreats - we believe that when people are inspired by place, anything is possible.

Let's get to work.

Connect with us today at pigottnet.com.



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Don't Compromise Your Vision

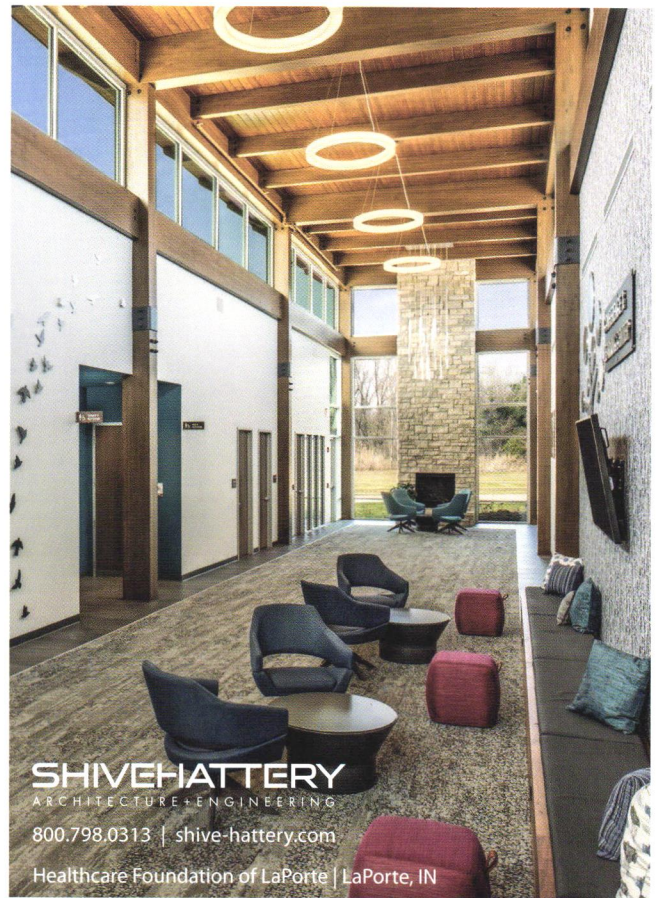
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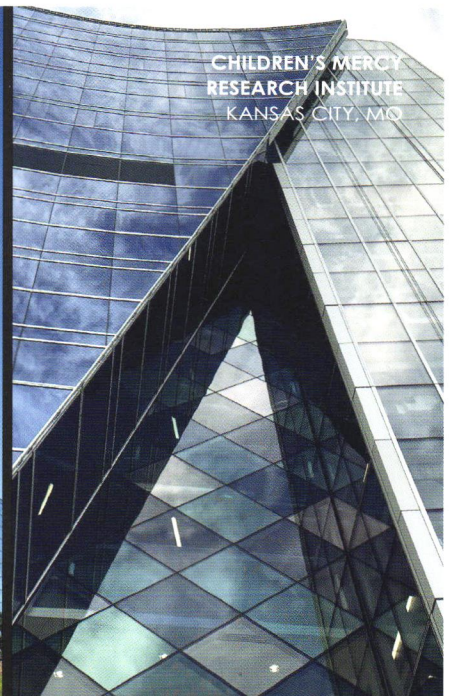
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PRECAST CONCRETE: SOMETHING TO CHEER ABOUT

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Architect:
Neumann Monson Architects/
HNTB Sports Architecture

Engineer:
HNTB/Raker Rhodes

Contractor:
JE Dunn

Owner:
University of Iowa

Precaster:
Gage Brothers

**Precast Specialty
Engineer:**
Adam Roark,
Gage Brothers

Photo credit:
Brian Ray/
HawkeyeSports.com

Location:
Iowa City, Iowa
(University of Iowa)


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