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Winter 2005

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Many Winners, Many Thanks

Have you noticed the recent proliferation of awards shows on television that seem like little more than manufactured excuses for celebrities to congratulate each other on their mutual wonderfulness? The annual Washington Chapter/AIA awards programs are nothing like that. They are serious events in which entrants face stiff competition and relatively slim odds of being selected for recognition. Although the 40 winners presented in this annual awards issue of ARCHITECTUREDC might seem like a lot, they were chosen from a pool of more than 300 entries. To ensure a level playing field and high judging standards, entries are submitted devoid of information about who did them, and are judged chiefly by panels of accomplished architects drawn from outside the Washington area. This year’s jurists, whose names appear below, include architects who are multiple award winners in their own right and have worked on significant projects around the country. Look these people up on the web and you will see some incredibly beautiful work. The Washington Chapter/AIA greatly appreciates the time and effort they generously contributed to this year’s awards program.

Almost as challenging as conducting the awards programs is presenting the winners in these pages in a way that does them justice. Even pretty pictures can be overwhelming if there are too many of them. This year that task fell to our guest editor, Denise Liebowitz, who took a mountain of material and made it lively and interesting. In addition to the awards this year there were several important architectural anniversaries celebrated at the German embassy. Roric McCroristin of the German Information Center, who was instrumental in helping us develop our wonderful tour of the German embassy complex held during Architecture Week in September, contributes an article explaining why these buildings are important as both local architectural landmarks and expressions of modern German design.

The annual AIA/DC awards program also recognizes individuals who have contributed to the Washington-area architectural scene in various ways. This year’s winners include Robert Schwartz, FAIA, Don Myer, FAIA, German Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, and DC Council member Jim Graham. Let their stories, which appear at the end of this issue, inspire you and remind you that that architecture is more than just buildings. It’s our community.

Mary Fitch, AICP
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The Georgetown branch of **Contemporaria** is open at last. Owner Deborah Kalkstein has traveled the world to bring the best in modern design to Cady's Alley. She is the exclusive US distributor for a new line of shelving from **Molteni & C**, the famous Italian furniture maker. Molteni's Pass collection is designed by Luca Meda and offers endless combinations: open units, sideboards, bookcases, shelves, and benches. The components can hang on the wall or rest on elegant aluminum feet. Available in sixteen colors of lacquer, from ivory to Pompeii red, four woods or five different shades of colored glass, Pass can store just about anything imaginable while making the room look spectacular. Because of the great variety of options, it is difficult to quote a price range. The system pictured is $8,081. See Pass in person at Contemporaria Georgetown, 3303 Cady's Alley, NW, Washington, DC 202.338.0193 or www.contemporaria.com

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Contractor: Austin Commercial
2004 Award of Merit in Architecture

This large sports and recreation facility transforms and expands an outdated 1970s campus building. It houses a weight and fitness center, a multi-purpose gymnasium, numerous ball courts, a running track, and an outdoor swimming pool. The renovation doubles the size of the existing building and old and new wings are unified around a two-story lobby and central corridor that serves as a busy pathway through the campus.

A broadly curved copper roof covers the dynamically shaped fitness center, the facility’s most highly visible space. Transparent glass walls provide views of people exercising inside. The jury considered the new structure a clever and exotic addition to the campus. “The building’s form clearly communicates the movement it contains, and the varied uses of materials such as copper visually tie the structure together.”
The Mather Building
Washington, DC
Cunningham + Quill
Architects
Contractor: P.N. Hoffman
2004 Award of Merit in Historic Resources

Constructed in 1917, the Mather Building parallels the history of downtown Washington. For its first 50 years it was an office building, then a part of the Federal City College campus, and finally abandoned and left empty for more than 20 years. Now, with the renaissance of the east end of downtown, the Mather Building is returning to life with a mix of arts spaces and loft housing.

Detailed restoration returned the Neo-Gothic façade and its first-floor storefronts to their original condition. Using historic photographs and existing fragments, new windows were constructed to replace inappropriate ones installed in the 1960s. In the interior, remnants of the building’s past, including the remains of a bowling alley, a ceramics kiln, and film storage vaults were tossed and replaced with sleek residential spaces. The jury recognized the real technical challenges the project presented and loved the interior’s “dramatic departure from the historic.”

United States Botanic Garden Conservatory
Washington, DC
DMJM Design
Contractor: Clark Construction Group, LLC
2004 Award of Excellence in Architecture

Washington’s Botanic Gardens is a treasured jewel among the city’s great landmarks. This complex restoration project celebrates the unique architectural character of the original 1933 building while bringing its antiquated complex of eight glass houses and galleries into the 21st century. The challenge was to ensure that every new technological upgrade blended seamlessly with the original building design. “Of the many projects that we saw that saved or renewed existing buildings, this was the most impressive,” jurors said.

To preserve the character of the original exterior of the conservatory, the architects retained its historic brick structure and restored or recreated portions of the exterior, including the classical limestone façade, fountains, and arched windows. They precisely recreated the dome of the former Palm House to support its 13,800-pound peak, and created state-of-the-art technological systems to ensure precise control of weather conditions day and night. “Exceptionally well executed,” was the verdict of the jury.
Burning Tree Residence
Bethesda, Maryland

David Jameson
Architect

Contractor: Gibson Builders, LLC
2004 Award of Merit in Architecture

The jury pronounced this modernist house "a surprisingly sophisticated solution for a speculative residence." Set on a hilly and forested site in a neighborhood of traditional colonials and ranches, the 'spec' house succeeds within the constraints of its stock materials and budget.

The structure is conceived as two simple gable roof bars that sit on either side of a circulation spine. The rear of the house generously embraces its backyard where mitered corner windows in the living room and second-floor master bedroom maximize views of the grounds. A long gallery enclosed by glass sliding doors provides further access. In the light-filled interior, transitions between one-story and full-height volumes offer drama and visual continuity.

Reconstruction of the Historic Kitchen at the Decatur House Museum
Washington, DC

Davis Buckley
Architects and Planners

Contractor: Grunley-Walsh Construction
2004 Award of Merit in Historic Resources

The Decatur House, designed by the "Father of American Architecture," Benjamin Henry Latrobe, and located on prestigious Lafayette Square, has been home to distinguished statesmen and diplomats. The National Trust for Historic Preservation acquired the house in 1956 and began the ongoing effort to restore it to its original 1818 appearance.

When vestiges of cooking grease were revealed in a prominent room previously thought to be a parlor, curators and preservation architects set to work to restore the historic kitchen. They recreated the correct configuration of the space with its built-in counters and shelves, returned the fireplace to its utilitarian appearance, and relaid brick flooring around the hearth. The jury particularly appreciated that the architects left a portion of the room unreconstructed while preservation research continues. "They didn't have all the information and knew when to stop their work to wait for a time when more research would be done."
To meet their evolving needs, Georgetown University's 70 Jesuits sought a new facility that supported both the public and private aspects of their community. Positioned prominently above the Potomac River in the new Southwest Quadrangle of the campus, the Jesuit Residence and its soaring tower add a memorable form to the Georgetown skyline. The exterior’s red brick and cast stone trim recall the architectural heritage of the campus while the crucifix forms in the windows refer to Jesuit traditions. For the jury the architects “generated a lot of architectural interest within the constraints of a historically referential vocabulary.”

The organization of the building provides a large first-floor community space, a main chapel, dining room, and a commons overlooking lawns and the river. The upper three floors accommodate private rooms with sitting and study areas and, for aging members, several assisted living suites. The jury appreciated the project’s “clearly articulated distinction between public and private areas” and its “richly detailed interiors.”
What is a Catalyst Award?

A Catalyst award honors projects that have a positive effect on Washington's streetscape. They are sparks that spur other development in the area that makes a difference in the neighborhood. This is the only category judged by local DC architects and business people as they can better assess the actual impact that a project may have had on the local community.
Green Door
Washington, DC
Envision Design, PLLC

Contractor: Hitt Contracting, Inc.
2004 Award of Excellence in Interior Architecture
2004 Catalyst Award

The challenge was to transform a dark, 1950s-era warehouse into a cheerful, eco-friendly environment filled with natural light. The facility is located in Washington’s transitioning Petworth neighborhood and houses a non-profit program supporting the mentally ill in independent living. The jury termed it an “artful and modest” project that keeps to the neighborhood scale and is “remarkably efficient in its urban gestures. It takes a very contextual building and creates a different world inside. The spirit of the place really spills out into the street.”

The project is green in numerous ways: roof-top parking reduces the need for impervious paving; new windows open to fresh air; and large skylights let in abundant natural light. Renewable and recycled materials and energy efficient strategies are applied throughout. Jurors noted the project was “built on a shoestring but with great creativity,” and concurred that the design “broke all the stereotypical images of the space.”

National Transportation Safety Board Academy
Ashburn, Virginia
Esocoff & Associates Architects

Contractor: Whiting-Turner Construction
2004 Award of Merit in Architecture

This research and training facility for the National Transportation Safety Board is located on The George Washington University’s Virginia campus. An expansive laboratory building houses large wreckage reconstructions used for investigative purposes, and currently holds the reassembled fuselage of the ill-fated TWA Flight 800. A conference and teaching facility is connected to the laboratory and features tiered classrooms, an auditorium, and administrative and multifunction spaces. Only the second major building on the campus, the structure’s facades are carefully detailed to be compatible with the smaller adjoining townhouse development and maintain the overall color palette of the campus.

The jury appreciated the building’s “big vault, generosity of light, and inventiveness with interior colors and materials. This is an uplifting space for those engaged in the grim realities of transportation tragedies.”
Fawcett Reeder Residence
Alexandria, Virginia
Franck Lohsen McCrery,
Architects

Contractor: Joe Reeder
2004 Award of Excellence in Historic Resources

Built in the 1770s, this is one of the oldest houses in Old Town Alexandria. The home has been owned by only three families and the interior was in its original condition, with a working 18th-century kitchen, smokehouse, and privies. Because destroying original historic fabric to accommodate an updated kitchen and bath was not an option, the architects added a small addition to a rear side yard to house the modern facilities. As a further step, the addition was designed to work with existing door openings to avoid cutting new openings in the historic structure. Apart from the addition, the project included the careful restoration of most of the interior.

The new construction of the addition employed traditional techniques such as doweled timber framing. When possible, recycled antique materials and hardware were used, when not, handcrafted replicas took their place. The entire addition is constructed so that it can be removed in the future and the structure returned to its original footprint.
movie house, the building had been abandoned and neglected. Working from historic photographs and documents, architects designed and fabricated new windows, doors, display cases, and ticket booth. They replaced the roof, upgraded the mechanical systems, and repaired and extended the lobby’s original terrazzo floor. Original doors were re-used in the lobby and decorative urns once again complete the building’s cornices. Concealed lighting at the marquee reflects the original 1920s design.

Repairs to the limestone exterior and elevator have been deferred until additional funding is available. Hailed by the jury as “an elegant restoration of a neighborhood landmark,” the theater is once again a cultural resource for the local community and features independent foreign and art films, special events, and non-profit programming.

In another project contributing to the revitalization of the city’s old downtown, the focus was on the preservation and restoration of a block of neglected 19th-century commercial structures in the heart of Washington’s Chinatown. Work included the design of new storefronts based on historic documentation, the restoration/preservation of the upper floors, and a fourth-floor addition. Height, scale, rhythm, proportion, color, and richness of detail were used to blend the new with the old.

The interiors were redesigned to meet the needs of restaurant and retail tenants. New openings were made in existing party walls to create flexible new spaces, and floor elevations were configured to accommodate existing window openings. “Each building had to be preserved in its own way; this was more than your average Main Street job,” said the impressed jury.
In this new headquarters for the Washington Gas Light Company the design team overtly and subtly pays homage to the organic process of making natural gas. "The branding is very creative yet subtle," according to jurors. "The use of blue to signal the color of gas, the rusticated stone wall, the fossilized floor, and tectonic ceiling plates all helped solve the puzzle of the building."

In the new space, the company has transitioned to an open floor plan where most employees are in workstations with low panels to enhance sightlines across the space. The main reception area provides a striking first impression and the adjacent panorama room offers expansive views of Constitution Avenue. For the jury, "this was a difficult footprint, and the designers were very clever and inventive in the way they used it. Well crafted and great use of detail," they concurred.

An open work environment, lots of natural light, and collaborative meeting spaces were what the Inter-American Development Bank wanted in its new offices. The design team organized the floor plan around central glass-enclosed conference rooms with open work areas along the perimeter. The result is airy views of the Washington skyline. A dramatic staircase links the facility’s three floors and is a focal point of the design. The painted steel stair cantilevers over the floor opening and the simple glass railing reinforces the verticality of the space.

Sustainability was an important element of this project that features materials with high recycled content, high-efficiency air handling units with controls, views for over 90 percent of the staff, and less artificial and more natural lighting.
Muzak
Fort Mill, South Carolina
Little Diversified
Architectural Consulting
Contractor: Bovis Lend Lease
2004 Award of Excellence in Interior Architecture

"A city in a box" was what the design team set out to create in this non-hierarchical office environment. The Muzak corporate headquarters is developed as a city center for company gatherings with vibrant interactive communal spaces, a network of "streets" leading to more private spaces, and bridges and avenues connecting a theater, café, post office, teaming space, and work areas for audio architects. "An inventive space with a different kind of aesthetic," the jury agreed.

Jurors especially appreciated the project's "street" materials—masonry, rubber, and metal—and the use of these materials to create different neighborhoods. "A real sense of discovery like in an urban space," they said. An open plan system that features identical offices for all employees reflects the company's culture. "There is a real interest in this space and it facilitates communication and interaction. Really hip, edgy, and urban; it goes a long way to chart a new image for the company."
Cady's Alley
Washington, DC
Martinez & Johnson
Architecture, PC
Contractor: Kodcon
2004 Catalyst Award

While Georgetown has long been a draw for shoppers and strollers, until recently there wasn't much reason for them to venture very far up M Street. Cady's Alley with its hip retail tenants and sensitive design has changed all that. Led by Martinez and Johnson Architecture, five design firms collaborated in this renovation of 12 rundown structures and the mews behind them. "It went from dismal to beautiful and made the place a destination," agreed the jurors.

An atrium space between the original shops and the infill structures behind them lets in abundant natural light, and a monumental granite stair in the middle of the block leads to a small piazza welcoming pedestrians into the mews. The new configuration did not remove party walls and kept the historic structures intact. "The building blocks of the city remain the same," the jury noted with approval. With the clean lines of the facades, the designers "created a theme for the design-oriented tenants they wanted to attract. Local architects working together created a real urban space instead of simply filling in the alley."
Terrell Place
Washington, DC
Oehrlein & Associates, Preservation Architect
Smithgroup, Architect
Contractor: Clark Construction Group, LLC
2004 Award of Excellence in Historic Resources

This project rehabilitates a group of late 19th-early 20th-century buildings along 7th and F Streets, NW, including the old Hechts department store and integrates them into two new structures. The buildings’ exteriors were restored to the era of their original construction, with the design of new street-level storefronts based on the existing historic fabric, historic photographs, and original building permit drawings. Work included restoration and replication of the original steel windows and cast iron balconies and canopies, repair and reproduction of the terra cotta façade, and restoration of the signature clock.

Today the buildings contain a mix of office, retail, residential and arts spaces and are contributing to the character of the Downtown Historic District. “This was a complex project that knits together old buildings with new components,” one juror commented. “Many times smaller buildings can’t stand on their own financially. By making them part of a bigger project we can preserve them for the future.”
The Peabody Library, designed by Edmund Lind with consultation by James Renwick and Richard Morris Hunt, was built in 1878. The fireproof iron structure incorporated innovations of the day, such as gas lighting and an electric elevator. The goal of this renovation was to make overdue repairs and to reinvigorate an institution that had closed itself off to the public.

The renovation created more workable interior spaces, restored original features, and modernized mechanical systems. The reading room has been brightened by restoring the glass panes underneath the skylight, and readers now conduct research at the original mahogany gallery tables. The refashioning of the front room to serve as a public gallery is a main feature of the renovation. The jury noted that with its moveable display cases and flexibility to accommodate large gatherings, “the gallery space is simple and well done.”
Sixth and I Historic Synagogue
Washington, DC
Shalom Baranes Associates, PC

Contractor: Zuckerman Gravely Development, Inc.
2004 Award of Excellence in Historic Resources

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the neighborhood surrounding the Sixth and I Historic Synagogue was one of Washington's most vibrant, and the area's Jewish community was a vital force. The 1906 synagogue with its eclectic blend of Byzantine and Classical elements was sold to the Turner AME church in 1951; crosses replaced Stars of David and a pulpit and choir supplanted the ark (cupboard for Torah scrolls) and bimah (reading platform).

The proportions and details of the ark and bimah were reconstructed by correlating fragments of the early structure with photographs of the interior dating from the 1930s. Derived from Moorish and Byzantine traditions, the interior's saturated color palette evokes the grandeur of European synagogue design. The inspiration for the decorative ceiling painting was drawn from the same historic sources and gold leaf brings sparkle into the space.

Westory Annex
Washington, DC
Shalom Baranes Associates, PC

Contractor: Sigal Construction
2004 Award of Excellence in Architecture

This deft infill project is an annex to a 1990 downtown office building that itself is an extension of the original 1908 commercial structure. The design challenge was to take clues from the adjacent buildings while asserting an independent and coherent architectural identity. A further challenge was to design a structure that could provide immediate expansion space for the existing building, but that could potentially function in the future as a stand-alone building with its own front-door identity and lobby.

The design reinforces the visual variety and physical continuity of the existing street wall. The jury found the annex "sensitive to its context without mimicking" and "reflected a good tension between looking like it is part of the fabric of the block and being original. Only at second glance do you notice that it is a new insertion; it's pretty tricky."
Kennedy Recreation Center
Washington, DC
Sorg and Associates, PC

Contractor: CM Construction
2004 Catalyst Award

This 3.3-acre park became one of the first memorials to John F. Kennedy when the President’s brother, Robert, donated it to the city in 1968. However, what started as a neighborhood treasure fell victim to neglect and vandalism as crime ravaged the community. Now, after years of local activism, a new facility serves as a safe haven for local children and offers tot lots, tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, indoor spaces for elder and child care, and educational activities. The jury hailed the project as a “community center for a neighborhood in transition.”

The center’s building that houses an oversize gym to accommodate community gatherings is a “showplace on a tight budget,” according to the jury. Its compact design minimizes the building footprint and maximizes outdoor play areas. Jurors were optimistic that this new neighborhood attraction will help spur “the renewal of the O Street Market and the 7th Street Bank recently landmarked nearby.”

Christ Church of Georgetown
Washington, DC
STUDIOS Architecture

Contractor: Romer Associates
2004 Award of Excellence in Historic Resources

Christ Church of Georgetown, a brick Gothic structure built in 1885, is listed in the National Register and the Old Georgetown Historic District. Benign neglect over the years and the awkward insertion of electric lighting and heating and air conditioning had prompted the parish to call for a major program of restoration and renovation. The church’s restoration committee worked with the designers reviewing parish archives for photographs and other documentation of the building’s original design and the history of subsequent alterations.

Technical consultants recommended procedures for restoring the stained glass windows and paint analysis identified the exact original colors. Workers laid new floor tiles obtained from the same English factory that had produced the originals, redesigned the lighting and mechanical systems, installed a state-of-the-art sound system, and modified the organ to a more historically and musically appropriate size. The jury particularly appreciated the design team’s comprehensive approach to the interior treatment.
In the early 20th century the National Park Seminary was a prestigious women's school and the fanciful international styles of its campus buildings reflected the educational philosophy of the school founders. The 1905 Pagoda housed a sorority clubhouse. During World War II the Pagoda was converted to Army officers' housing and over the next 40 years was covered in layers of military paint, sheet metal, and asphalt shingles until eventually abandoned. The Army now leases the building to a non-profit preservation group that is restoring the exterior.

The design team aided by volunteers replicated the original painted canvas roof covering, removed layers of paint, and replaced the rotten wood. Broken glass, missing hardware, and inoperable windows were replaced, and the exterior repainted using the original colors and types of paint. The jury felt that this project was worthy not only for its distinctive architecture, but because "so many volunteers had worked their tails off to make it happen."
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As suburban subdivisions relentlessly creep across America's remaining farmland, four architects look back at the country's receding agricultural past and offer distinctive visions to preserve and reinterpret its architectural vernacular. The idea of the American farmhouse and its place in the rural landscape inspires and connects these four award-winning projects. They range from the preservation of a gracious Federal-style country residence to the construction of a strikingly contemporary guest house on a former farm; and from the renovation of a primitive log cabin to the expansion of a modest clapboard house with a steel and glass pavilion. Although the projects diverge widely in objective, program, and aesthetic sensibility, they all pay homage to their architectural antecedents, and with bold 21st-century strokes celebrate American design and landscape.

**Salona**

**McLean, Virginia**

**Richard Williams Architects**

**Contractor: D. Morris Steinbroker & Son, Inc.**

**2004 Award of Excellence in Historic Resources**

This early 19th-century farm occupies 42 acres in the midst of commercial suburban Washington and includes an elegant Federal-style main house and a cohesive collection of early outbuildings—a smoke house, springhouse, privy, corn crib, chicken coop, and several sheds. The property—a remnant of a more extensive farm of several hundred acres—is a rare surviving example of the farmsteads that used to dot the Fairfax County countryside. By maintaining the integrity of the landscape and outbuildings, the design team preserved an entire ensemble of buildings rather than a single artifact.

Project architect Richard Williams, a college classmate of Salona's owner, says, "The property has been in relatively few hands so has stayed remarkably intact." He also notes that with its views of undisturbed countryside, "Salona is quite a discovery when you come across it in the midst of busy McLean."

The main house is a carefully detailed two-story brick structure, constructed around 1812, with a two-story side wing added in
Karen DuVal, who with her husband, Ken, owns Salona, says, “We love the age of the house. My husband grew up here and had a strong disinclination to change anything. His parents were early environmentalists and lived the idea of stewardship.” She also reports the project only improved the long-standing relationship she and her husband had with their architect. “It was a wonderful partnership. We started out good friends and by the end we were even better friends.”

“Restored but not sanitized,” is how the jury described the renovation. “The work maintains the property’s original character and the age of the buildings shines through so they don’t look new.”
At the other end of the farmhouse spectrum is the recently constructed and clean-lined guest house overlooking 100 acres of sweeping lawns in Dutchess County, New York. "We all wanted to stay overnight at this guest house," said one approving juror. Designed by Meditch Murphey Architects, the guest house nails down the southern edge of a compound of buildings nestled into a hill on a former farm. The simple lines of the structure pick up those of the surrounding hills and respond to the site's exposure to harsh winds and strong sun. The heavy western façade hunkers down to face the weather and the open eastern façade is a kind of proscenium thrust into a natural 360-degree theater. Architect John Murphey explained this connection of the building to its site, "We wanted to be right out there in this spectacular landscape. This is a structure that needs a lot of elbow room; it wouldn't work in the city."

"It's all about the view," jurors agreed. "Everything supports that focus: the massing, the roof lines, and the position on the site."

With two bedrooms and two baths sharing a common kitchen/dining/living room, the house weighs in at a modest 1,600 square feet. The totally custom interior of the structure showcases the extraordinary talent of local craftsmen. Murphey said he tried to evoke the project's farm connections through simple materials. "We used basic materials—wood, stucco, stone—that wouldn't be out of place in a barnyard."
Wheatland Farms Log Cabin
Waterford, Virginia
Reader & Swartz Architects, PC

Contractor: Douglass C. Reed
2004 Award of Merit in Historic Resources

The final project that recalls its agricultural past is a tiny log cabin that marked the start of Wheatland Farms in the early 19th century. As development engulfed the area around the farm, the cabin was abandoned and fell into disrepair. Architects Elizabeth Reader and Charles Swartz have helped their clients revive the structure as a defiantly rural icon.

The goal was to restore the original structure and to construct a sympathetic addition. The cabin had the scale of another time: the footprint measured barely more than 14 feet by 18 feet, the front door was just over 5 feet tall, and windows were less than 2 feet wide. Restoration techniques were consistent with the construction methods of the early 1800s. The cabin's original chink and daub were stripped. Rotted chink was replaced and new wire lath was installed between the logs on both the interior and exterior creating a cavity in which new wiring and insulation could be installed. A new roof was installed over the old allowing the cabin's original rafters to be exposed on the second floor.

The stone chimney was relaid and new windows were constructed to replicate what remained of the cabin’s existing windows. Modern technology—a state-of-the-art sound system and high speed Internet access—is tightly packed into the old and new parts of the residence and new mechanical equipment and ductwork is hidden in the crawl space and building cavities.

The new addition contains what the log portion doesn’t—plumbing (a kitchen, laundry, and bathrooms) and plenty of light. On the second floor, a glass-floored catwalk crosses over the kitchen below, linking the old and new portions of the house and creating a tall, light-filled space.

"The trick was not to let the addition overwhelm the original structure," says architect Elizabeth Reader. And she is particularly pleased with the glass catwalk solution that "allows daylight to flood the kitchen and gives a sense of height and space."

Reader’s clients, Ava Abramowitz and Neil Rackham, have restored other properties and came to the project with clear ideas about the client/architect relationship. "This was a totally partnered project," says Abramowitz. "We worked closely with the architects and contractor from the beginning so there was absolutely no confusion. Beth and Chuck listened very carefully and we designed together. It was such an electric partnership; we were spinning with joy after each meeting."

Rackham has equally clear thoughts about what they wanted for the cabin and the property it sits on. "We are simply stewards; we only have this land for a while. We wanted a building that looked like it grew out of the land and that’s what we have."

The jury agreed. In summing up the project, one juror said simply, "This is poetry."
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The U.S. spa industry is booming. A recent study for the International Spa Association reports there are an estimated 12,000 spas throughout the country, double the number of only four years ago. Last year 45 million people visited American spas, and in 2003 the industry achieved $11.2 billion in revenue. By any measure, this is a growth market for spa owners and their architects.

Two of this year’s AIA/DC award winners demonstrate that these urban sanctuaries of wellness and relaxation are the ideal showcase for high style and eco-friendly design. The architects for two new Washington facilities, SomaFit and Nusta Spa, confronted different challenges but both arrived at solutions that celebrate healthy bodies and outstanding design.

Theodore Adamstein and Olvia Demetriou, principals in their own firm, were the design team and clients for SomaFit, a combined fitness and spa facility in Georgetown. “The business grew out of our own experiences,” says Adamstein. “For years we had been running all over town for massages, personal trainers, yoga classes, and everything else. I had an idea that I couldn’t let go of: a non-membership club that offered all the services but where you pay only for what you want.” Adamstein is the managing partner of the SomaFit venture that he and Demetriou started with a small group of business investors.

Their 8,500-square-foot facility houses a personal training gym; two studios for Pilates, yoga, and other conditioning classes; nine spa treatment rooms; quiet lounges; and showers, saunas, and steam rooms. SomaFit’s “work/reward” approach to fitness became the cornerstone for the design concept. “The design challenge was to create separate identities for the fitness side and the spa side of the club,” explained Adamstein. “The fitness areas had to be high-energy and dramatic; the spa needed to be a quiet, more private, ‘de-stresssing’ environment.”

The space unfolds as a series of zones: the reception area is flanked by the gym and exercise studios. A progression of frosted acrylic panels on pivots and louvered screens give rhythm and definition to the cardio areas. The entrance to the spa, inspired by ancient bathhouses, is a rotunda where deep blue mosaic tiles contrast with porcelain-white tiled walls. The project employs a reduced architectural language free of excess ornament and distinguished by natural wood, translucent surfaces, and a neutral palette.

“The design had to work equally well for men and women—
we didn’t want it to feel like a salon,” says Adamstein. “Great syncopation!” said the jury in describing the interior. Jurors agreed that the design’s zoning was “compact and clever,” and they particularly liked the “whimsical quality of the vibrantly colored furnishings.”

Bold design elements, customized lighting, and sensual materials come together to create SomaFit’s distinctive interior.

In this burgeoning market, first-time spa owner Elizabeth Snowdon and her architect, Kendall Wilson, founder of Envision Design, have made their project distinctive through a strong commitment to environmental responsibility. Nusta Spa, is the first spa in the United States to be accepted into the LEED for Commercial Interiors Pilot Program. LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design), created by the U.S. Green Building Council, measures the standard of eco-friendly buildings. “The green component of this facility and its healthier low-impact environment was a feature of the project from the start,” says Wilson. His firm has established its leadership in sustainable design with projects for such eco-friendly clients as Environmental Defense, the National Audubon Society, the World Wildlife Fund, and Greenpeace USA. “We like to demonstrate that being green doesn’t mean doing without.”

The 5,000-square-foot spa includes a reception space, consultation room, relaxation area, seven treatment rooms, locker rooms, and support spaces in an atmosphere completely removed from the bustle of city life. An eleven-foot wall of reclaimed oak boards separates the public and private spaces; an indoor waterfall provides soothing sounds in the relaxation area; and wall, floor, and finish materials meet the highest standards of sustainability. The content of the locally produced carpet is more than 50 percent recycled, and the architect-designed print materials including business cards, letterhead, and promotional materials use vegetable-based inks and recycled paper.

Wilson credits his client and her insistence on customer service and quality for much of the impetus for the project’s sustainable focus. “Elizabeth wanted her spa to cater to individual client needs, and she wanted the architecture to be as flexible as the spa treatments. The project’s green features added quality more than they added cost.” For example, individual thermostats in each treatment room that allow clients to control the temperature are both luxurious as well as energy efficient.

Owner Snowdon agrees. “Before opening my own business, I was an avid spa consumer and my ideas about highly individualized service come from my own experiences as a spa customer. In the beginning, I knew at some level I wanted to create a healthy, environmentally responsible spa, and Envision’s expertise in sustainable design was a huge selling point. Working with Envision was really an education for me. They brought such a depth of knowledge to the project and built my level of commitment to green design.”

“The connection between a health and wellness facility and environmentally sound design is obvious,” says Snowdon. “Increasingly in the spa industry eco-friendly environments are a prominent selling feature.” Nusta Spa’s green components “really differentiate it in the market and have received a very positive reception among customers.”

**What’s Sustainable Design?**

The Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design is given to a project that is designed to be energy efficient and environmentally responsible.
The Chapter Awards are not the only competition that AIA/DC sponsors. Each spring for the last 22 years we have cosponsored the Washingtonian Residential Design Competition with Washingtonian Magazine. This year eight projects were honored at a special reception at the Finnish embassy and in the pages of the June issue of Washingtonian. The projects ranged from a beautiful summer house on Rappahannock Bend by McInturff Architects, to a perfect Cotswold Cottage by Versaci Neumann and Partners, to a tiny, ingenious kitchen renovation by Scout Motor Company. The jury praised the “inspiration, simplicity and joy” expressed in this years’ winning entries.

This year’s winners included:

- Private Residence - Barnes Vanze Architects
  Linn Company Contractor
- Pierce Winter House - McInturff Architects
  Evergreen Homes Contractor
- Rappahannock Bend - McInturff Architects
  Bonnitt Builders Contractor
- Arlington Bungalow - Moore Architects
  GN Contracting Inc.
- Hargrave Residence - Robert M. Gurney, FAIA
  M. T. Puskar Construction Company, Inc.
- 1432 - Scout Motor Company Architect and Contractor
- 2002 HGTV Dream House - Sorg and Associates
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Modern Icon Turns 40
And That's Not the Only Anniversary at the German Embassy
by Roric McCorristin

At a time when modern, forward-looking German architecture continues to capture the imagination of the international community—just ask any recent visitor to Berlin or Frankfurt—the German embassy in Washington is marking the anniversaries of its chancery and residence. These buildings not only exemplify innovative German design, but have become Washington architectural landmarks as well.

Although its visionary design may suggest otherwise, the German chancery turned 40 years old this year. Egon Eiermann, a contemporary of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, was commissioned in 1958 to design a new embassy on a plot of land near the intersection of Foxhall and Reservoir Roads to accommodate Germany’s rapidly growing diplomatic mission. From the start, designing the chancery was an exercise in diplomacy; Eiermann faced the tricky task of inserting a large office building into a primarily residential neighborhood. Furthermore, in doing so he had to negotiate unusually rugged terrain: the land slopes more than 50 feet over a distance of 130 yards.

His solution was to design a long, narrow building, turn its façade perpendicular to the street, and stagger its height to conform to the property’s slope. As a result, the structure measures only 50 feet wide and two stories high where it fronts Reservoir Road, dimensions which belie the building’s true size. The upper floors are stepped back so that the building eventually rises to an aboveground height of six stories at its core, and then recedes again until the fourth story meets ground level at its north end. Eiermann’s siting accomplishes an incredible sleight-of-hand: regardless from where the passerby views it, the chancery, nestled into the hillside, appears to diminish in size. From the street one cannot tell that it holds 140 offices. As Eiermann put it in a letter to his wife, “It is a giant house that no one sees.”

Adding to the illusion of the building’s size, the chancery is encased by an external grid, an Eiermann trademark, composed of steel catwalks and layered with railings, glass, more steel, and wood lattices. Despite its decorative appearance, this superstructure was designed to be functional—Eiermann never embellished with unnecessary design flourishes. The grid facilitates maintenance and upkeep of the mostly glass façade, serves as a fire escape, and filters incoming sunlight. It works aesthetically as well, giving the building an inviting, light and open feeling, and actually highlights the open space preserved by its stepped-back design.

The chancery’s design symbolizes a sea change in German architecture. Eiermann’s style was embraced in the 1950s because it was completely new, modern, and different—Germany was literally
The German Chancery today
building a new reputation for itself on the world stage. Eiermann asserted a new vision, one of transparency, honesty, and precision, but he did so with humble dignity and understatement. The significance of the chancery’s design is still appreciated in Germany. In fact, it is currently being featured alongside Eiermann’s other major works from the 1950s and 60s, including the famous Friedrich Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, at the first ever Eiermann retrospective, which just opened in Karlsruhe in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the architect’s birth.

Located just a short walk away from the chancery is the ambassador’s residence, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. Designed by Oswald Matthias Ungers, a student of Egon Eiermann, the building is its own impressive showcase of modern German design.

Envisioning the residence as a place of cultural exchange, Ungers’s design takes historical tradition into account while portraying a new, progressive spirit as well. The result is a synthesis of traditional and modern styles. Tradition is there, but stripped to its most basic elements, and incorporated into Ungers’s rational combination of reduced forms. The residence’s leitmotif is the square, which influences everything from the layout of the rooms to the windows and doors, furniture, and artwork. Ungers considers the residence a gesamtkunstwerk, a collective work of art, in which the artwork, landscaping and even the silverware are as crucial to the building as its exterior design.

In contrast to the chancery, which purposefully takes a very low profile, the residence strikes a commanding pose atop the same hilltop the chancery inconspicuously sits behind. On the exterior, Ungers’s stripped classical portico evokes diverse historical references. Germans often first recognize the Sans Souci castle in Potsdam by its combination of columns and tiered garden. Americans tend to see the terrace as a classic southern porch, such as at George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate. Critics in the German press caught the building planners off guard when they initially feared that the residence’s bold architectural language would recall elements of architectural design favored during the Third Reich—the same traditions that Eiermann’s design, on display just next door, so successfully departed from. Time has softened the harshest reactions to the residence as many guests and neighbors have come to know and enjoy the building. But the different first impressions underscore how personal, sensitive, and fraught with meaning the architectural representation of a country can be.

Washington is fortunate to have two buildings which represent such remarkable architectural eras and architects. Egon Eiermann’s chancery and O.M. Ungers’s residence have earned strong reputations locally and internationally over the years. They have endured as outstanding examples of modern German architecture, and continue to fascinate their Washington neighbors.
Preserving A Washington Icon:
Ambassador Ischinger Receives Stewardship Award

by Mary Fitch, AICP

In celebration of the anniversaries of the German chancery and residence, the Washington Architectural Foundation presented Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger with its Stewardship Award. This award honors the ambassador for preserving distinguished architecture that makes a lasting contribution to Washington’s architectural heritage.

Ischinger has not only preserved the embassy buildings, he has enhanced them in subtle ways to further their diplomatic mission. For example, he named the sixth-floor conference room, with its arresting view of the surrounding countryside, the Prittwitz Saal in honor of the German ambassador who served in Washington from 1928 – 1933, the only German ambassador to resign as a matter of conscience upon Hitler’s rise to power. While naming the room does not change the architecture, it gives the room an additional purpose. Each person who enters the room learns something new about the history of the German diplomatic mission in Washington.

Similarly, in the embassy’s residence, Ischinger and his wife, Jutta Falke-Ischinger, have made some changes that have helped to make the 19,000-square-foot building feel more like a home. The rearrangement of furniture and the addition of carpets and plants help soften the atmosphere of the reception area, the residence’s largest room. Their most dramatic addition to the residence has been the “Berlin Bar,” a colorful space designed in what was a former storage area in the basement. Mrs. Falke-Ischinger took control of this empty space and made it into an elegant, relaxed counterpoint to the more formal rooms upstairs.

The Washington Architectural Foundation congratulates Ambassador and Mrs. Ischinger for helping the embassy continue to play a significant role in Washington architecture and design.
Gensler Wins
First-Ever WAF Firm of the Year Award
by Mary Fitch, AICP

The Washington Architectural Foundation inaugurated a new award this year to celebrate the volunteer spirit of Washington’s architecture firms. Its first recipient is Gensler’s Washington office, ably led by Diane Hoskins. For the past five years, Gensler has given its time and talent to the Foundation. More than 400 hours of volunteer time have been donated to the Foundation’s Architecture in the Schools program. The quality of service is of such a high standard that one former employee, Christina Hayunga, received a special commendation from the District of Columbia Schools. Of particular note was the great contribution that Gensler made to the development of the Leckie Garden Memorial, which was dedicated last year to the teacher, student, and two parents killed in the Pentagon attack. WAF needed 40 volunteers to teach in the classroom once a month for an entire school year and help build the garden. Gensler provided nine volunteers to this important effort. The Foundation thanks Gensler for its valuable service and hopes it serves as an inspiration to others throughout the city.
Unlimited Vision:
Donald Beekman Myer, FAIA Wins the 2004 Centennial Award
by Mary Fitch, AICP

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Washington Chapter/AIA President David Neumann announced that Donald Beekman Myer, FAIA, has been selected as the 2004 winner of the Chapter's Centennial Award. This award is the highest honor the Chapter can bestow upon a member. It is given to an architect whose contributions span at least a decade of service to the Chapter, the community, and the profession.

In its unanimous decision to award the medal to Myer, the Centennial Award Jury commended Myer's active participation in the Chapter and the community. Noting his time as Clerk of the Works of the National Cathedral, one juror said “Don was and still is an incredibly positive and respected leader in the community. He is wonderful ally for good design.”

Myer’s career in Washington began “after a distinguished career as an army truck driver,” with a National Park Service appointment to work on renovation of the Washington Monument. Soon, thereafter he started his 27-year career with the US Commission of Fine Arts. “This was an extremely exciting period,” says Myer, “It was a great opportunity to work with people who really shaped this community.” Myer was noted not only for doing his job well, but for always “being on the verge of some new enterprise.” According to Charles Atherton, FAIA, former Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts, Myer’s study of the Bridges of Washington “is the only source of information about this important element of the city fabric and has been in demand since its first printing in 1974.” After he retired from the Commission, Myer went on to become Clerk of the Works of the National Cathedral and Curator of Buildings and Grounds at Tudor Place in Georgetown.

Beyond his service to the city and the nation, Myer was pivotal in the growth and development of the Washington Chapter/AIA. “During its all-important centennial year, he not only served as president, but also undertook the publishing of the Centennial

History of the Washington Chapter; no small task given the complex and lengthy record of Chapter involvement in extensive planning efforts leading up to the first centennial of the capital and the 1901-02 Senate Park Commission,” wrote Atherton in his letter of support. Myer played an important role in the formation of the Washington Architectural Foundation and served as its president from 1997-1999. “What astonishes me about Don Myer” one juror noted “was the amount of energy and political capital he gave to the Chapter purely for the good of the order.”

Rather than rest on his laurels, Myer has continued to be active. He teaches graduate studies in Architecture at The Catholic University of America, continues to play a role in the Cathedral community, and is taking classes in botanic illustration. “I am enthusiastic about the future. It was a great thrill to play an essentially behind-the-scenes role and watch how the city has changed. The future is looking really great for the architectural profession.”

Myer is particularly thrilled that preservation has come into its own in Washington. “It was so wonderful to be part of projects like the Willard, the Hotel Washington, and the Apex Building on Pennsylvania Avenue. He teaches his students now about the interrelatedness of design disciplines. “Preservation has really grown to include urban design, campus design, landscape; it’s all how you integrate it.”

In his letter of support, Mark McInturff, FAIA summed up Myer’s career with these words:

“I have always appreciated the fact that the Centennial Medal can be given to a recipient for any one of a variety of forms of service to the profession and the city. There have been great designers, great teachers, and great community leaders. That the medal celebrates the diversity of our profession makes it only more appropriate that Don, who is such an advocate of the broadest vision of design, should be its 2004 recipient.”
A Champion for the City
Councilmember Jim Graham Receives Foundation’s Glenn Brown Award

by Mary Fitch, AICP

There is an urban renaissance going on in Washington’s most populous ward. New money, new vigor, new buildings are coming to Adams Morgan, 14th Street, and Columbia Heights with near blinding speed. Previous issues of ARCHITECTUREDC Magazine are filled with new and proposed projects. The speed at which things are changing in Ward 1 could ultimately be detrimental to the neighborhood fabric. Councilmember Jim Graham has worked hard, however, both to spur the economic revitalization of the ward and to protect its diverse character.

It is for his sincere effort to make sure that new prosperity benefits all—neighbors old and new—that Graham has been selected as the 2004 recipient of the Glenn Brown Award. Created in 2000 by the Washington Chapter/AIA and the Washington Architectural Foundation, the Glenn Brown Award honors an individual who has raised the public awareness of architecture and its benefits to society, thereby improving the quality of life in Washington, DC.

Although Graham has been a Councilmember since 1999, his influence on the neighborhood started well before his government service. As executive director of the Whitman Walker Clinic he helped pioneer DC’s response to the AIDS crisis and build a network of clinics and service that serves DC’s gay and lesbian community, brought a measure of stability to the 14th Street Corridor, and helped ready it for the renaissance it enjoys today. “I’m very proud,” says Graham, “that I was able to save two Arts and Crafts commercial buildings in Washington.” As Councilmember, Graham made sure the new features of the Tivoli Theatre project protected the historic theatre while bringing new services to the neighborhood. He helped link parts of the ward with a simple, yet innovative transit system, the U Street Link, which connects the U Street and Woodley Park Metro stations. He was also the champion of the award-winning streetscape and façade improvement program along Georgia Avenue (ARCHITECTUREDC, Winter 2004, p. 30).

In announcing the award, Foundation President Stephen J. Vanze, AIA noted that “Jim Graham has made a difference in a very diverse DC community at a time of its greatest transition. At the same time we celebrate the new development, we also applaud Mr. Graham’s efforts that development benefits all the residents of the neighborhood.”
It was the unanimous decision of the Washington Architectural Foundation's Board of Directors that Robert Schwartz, FAIA receive the 2004 John "Wieb" Wiebenson Award for Architecture in the Public Interest. Given in honor and memory of John Wiebenson, this award celebrates architects who make careers out of doing good.

"It's a tremendous honor to be linked with Wieb," said Schwartz upon learning he had won the award. "Wieb was an exceptionally good person who led an exemplary life. There are very few people I would consider role models, but I felt that way about Wieb." Schwartz met Wiebenson when he first came to Washington and always looked forward to seeing him. "He had strong opinions but he was basically a lot of fun. Even when you disagreed with him, you appreciated his honesty."

Schwartz started his career at the University of Cincinnati Architecture School. He participated in the co-op program that allowed him to work at many architecture firms all over the country and experience lots of different ways of practicing and different office sizes. "In those days, you could get a job anywhere. It was an invaluable experience. I even worked overseas." One project in particular helped to shape his design philosophy. "We were in school and thought we knew everything, of course, and were asked to design a commercial street. We unveiled our design with every expectation that we were brilliant and the merchants just hated it. They went through a list of everything they needed which of course was not what we had done. This was an important moment for me, it planted the seed." Schwartz then studied planning at Harvard and MIT with Kevin Lynch as his mentor. "Before Lynch, few people were looking in any sort of scientific or systematic way..."
about how people see things or why people feel the way they do. This fascinated me.

Schwartz’ firm, Schwartz and Peoples, works on residential projects, clinics, and religious buildings, which Schwartz believes are the best project an architect can get. “It combines all the quality of a residential project, with a civic structure and then you add the deeper meaning, the spiritual quality, of the space. We like the kind of projects that require consensus building. Other architects may hate that but we think it makes the project more interesting.”

Schwartz tries to make his pro bono work really cheerful. “These clinics we’ve done for Mary’s Center and La Clinica del Pueblo really help people to feel better. There is so much fear and impatience related to doctor visits and our spaces seem to calm that. These populations we are serving are often relegated to second-class space, and now not only are they getting first-class space, it is uniquely designed for them. It is really empowering.”

Asked why he thinks pro bono work is important, Schwartz responded “You always get back more than you give with these projects. People are so appreciative and thankful. There is something more satisfying with this. If you have a technical skill and you can use it in some way to improve society, I think that’s very important.” Schwartz believes he has received more jobs because he does pro bono work, “Regular paying clients have a very positive feeling about the kind of work I do for my pro bono clients.”

“I think I like doing this work,” he continued, “because I am very comfortable with people and look for ways that I can help, a way to do something good. Wieb was like that, too. He was so comfortable with himself and so interested in people. I am deeply honored to be counted in his company.”
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