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- Norton J. Hatlie, Vice President, Finance & Operations, United Way of Central Iowa
GRAND AWARD
The John Crystal Center
Grinnell College - Grinnell, Iowa
Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

AWARDS OF MERIT

The Temple for Performing Arts
Des Moines, Iowa
Shiffler Associates Architects

Polk County NW Community Center
Des Moines, Iowa
Architects Smith Metzger

Iowa School for the Deaf
Lied Multipurpose Complex
Council Bluffs, IA
InVision Architecture
AWARD OF MERIT WITH DISTINCTION
North Ridge Park Pavilion
Coralville, IA
Neumann Monson Architects

SPECIAL MENTION AWARD
Soumas Court
Perry, IA
Wetherell Ericsson Leusink Architects

GOLDEN TROWEL AWARD
Forrest and Associate, Inc.
Dick Felice receives the Golden Trowel Award for excellence in craftsmanship – The John Chrysalis Center, Grinnell College
AWS provided and installed the entire envelope for this ten-story building in downtown Des Moines. The envelope consists of stone, glass, and metal. The wall system is a "Unitized Rain Screen" which incorporates the exterior envelope insulation and a galvanized steel air barrier.
Contents

Cover
Woodbury County Courthouse Restoration

Firm: Wetherell Ericsson
Leusink Architects, PLC

Photo by:
George Lindblade

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OUR BLUEPRINT WAS DESIGNED TO KEEP YOU IN THE BLACK.

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am an MTV kid. Growing up I wasted a fair number of years playing video games. I have a love/hate relationship with my television. I absolutely love the Internet. It would be fair to say that I've spent a decent amount of my life in a virtual reality of one kind or another.

I love to travel — and the quicker I can get to wherever I'm going the better. I recently boarded a jet late one evening, slept all night, and awoke in Chile. I was 10,000 miles from home — literally halfway around the world — and not even my sleeping pattern had been disturbed.

The speed of modern travel and ease at which we propel ourselves around the globe has expanded our collective possibilities and our possible limitations, dangers, and shortcomings, beyond most anything previous generations may have thought possible. It only takes an overnight plane trip to be able to ski the Andes. But it also only takes an overnight plane trip for a previously harmless and geographically contained virus to find new, susceptible hosts who are not tolerant of it. A world without borders is truly that.

The complexities of modern life leave most of us multitasking — if not downright frenetic. As a giant human collective we are busier than we have been at any one time in our history. Our time spent in traditional human realationships has waned.

This issue of Iowa Architect will be about those places that bring us back into the collective — the public aspects of our society. These are places of relationships. These are places of community. These are places of history and memory. These are places of learning. These are places which keep us Centered.

Channing Swanson, AIA
Coeditor
"Geograph," the latest work by cultural inclusionist, Peter Goché, is another of his audibly silent inquiries into understanding the nature of existence.

The material basis for this inquiry is a silk baptismal gown. Goché provides a polyphonic reading of this artifact through a series of studies and explorations.

With an invitation from Kirk Blunck, development of this work was initiated in the Hohberger Building [a vacant space] on Des Moines' east side. The inquiry began by simply placing the gown at the top of an existing warehouse ladder. The gown is accompanied by six full-size images of itself attached to the underside of the stair treads of the ladder.

The inquiry continues with the incorporation of an existing table measuring 5 by 30 feet. Suspended above the table is a herd of 45 folded prints. The images are clipped individually to a series of five chords running the length of the warehouse space. Aligned with the length of the table, these chords are attached to the crown molding at the front of the space and to the floor at the rear of the space.

A silk baptismal gown provides the tangible basis for the initial "Geograph" study. The gown evokes a gamut of emotion for the viewer.

Goché provided a pizzicato garment, serves as the foundation for his exploration.

The installation offers the audience an opportunity to examine and understand what is conveyed due to the presence of sensuous materials associated with past events. Standing in silence, one can visualize the baby that occupied the gown and hear him or her coo or cry out. One can ponder the memory of processional music at a baptismal ceremony — or imagine the very strings that suspend the images being plucked as a violinist would in the pizzicato section of a piece of music.

The "Geograph" study was expanded to the storefront of Designgroup, Inc., 325 E. Fifth St., when Goché was commissioned by the City of Des Moines to install a piece of art for the Storefront Public
Goché offers an empty platter as a reference to the ritual of eating.

The prints are suspended in the evening light moving with grace and randomness with the natural airflow in the room.

The herd of forms ascends skyward on strings attached to the crown molding in the front of the space and the floor at the rear.

Art Project in Des Moines' East Village.

The herd of forms appears in its new venue in concert behind a veil of the phrase acceptum ipse, screened thousands of times onto the storefront glass. The phrase, which is Latin for receive me, adds yet another layer to the fugue of "Geograph." Because this voluminous layer exists, the participant is transfixed or even distracted, trying to read and translate the text, at the same time focusing in on the paper forms. Beneath the suspended forms, behind the text screen, sit three dinner place settings. The place settings are an obvious reference to an activity we practice daily — eating.

Goché's choice of a baptismal gown coaxes the viewer towards an image of what it means to be baptized, an invitation to a blessed table. The gown has other obvious references, too, but the astute viewer is not satisfied with a surface explanation. She becomes actively involved in her imagination with personal memories or associations of the same tangibles Goché presents.

Every viewer will be drawn in some way to the symbols presented, and each will associate them with personal memories. These recollections explain and make us who we are, and dictate how we interact with others. They may even provoke a public display of a gamut of emotions.

Goché's silent inquiry, "Geograph," like music, exists in time and then goes away. The participant is left with a new memory of something that seems chaotic in the moment, but offers absolution in the end.

—M. Monica Gillen lives and works in Ames.
In late 1914, the Sioux City architect William Steele, who from 1896 to 1899 had apprenticed in the Chicago office of Louis Sullivan, won a limited local competition to build the Woodbury County Courthouse. Though his winning entry was Gothic Revival, Steele persuaded the County Board of Supervisors to build a 'Prairie School' design instead. Lacking the confidence to execute the extensive commission alone, Steele invited as associate architects his friend George Grant Elmslie and Elmslie's partner, William Purcell. The renowned Minneapolis partnership revised the design extensively. In March 1915 the new design was reviewed and tentatively approved by a committee of city supervisors. The revised design called for a 60-foot-high brick block of courtrooms and county offices surmounted by a seven-story high brick office tower. The scheme was not without its detractors. Concerned businessmen protested that local soil conditions could not support such a structure, that the proposed windowless basement would prove intolerable, that the tower was an unnecessary "architectural experiment — unusual and extreme," and that most local citizens preferred a courthouse of "ordinary and usual design." Despite criticism, the revised design was adopted and the courthouse was built largely as Steele, Purcell, and Elmslie had intended, though only eight stories high and with basement apertures of obscure glass. Completed in two years on March 1, 1918 at a cost of $850,000, the result is a unique and wondrous civic center, perhaps the most significant building in all of Iowa.

In plan, the rectangular base is a square donut, its central void providing an atrium lobby. On the elevated entry level, three of the donut's four sides house mundane county-seat agencies all symmetrically arranged, while the fourth forms a definite back to the building providing space for non-public affairs. The two-story lobby is illuminated by natural light from a glass dome that seems to billow out, uniting the interior with the exterior and relieving the space of its need for a ceiling. It offers its 'dome-ness' as an established icon, a familiar courthouse accoutrement, even if somewhat out of place as a half-sphere in an otherwise completely orthogonal structure. The four courtrooms are on the...
View of rotunda including steel-framed dome and polychrome interior atrium. The centered ornate stair is flanked by John Norton’s mural, a memorial to WW-I.
mezzanine above the entry level. Each is identical: symmetrical and with an ecclesiastic aura; of natural brick, cork, and leathers (all magnificently restored); dominated by a gabled skylight that establishes a vertical axis; reveling in Prairie School details including sumptuous pendant lights and carefully modulated stained glass openings. Oddly, yet purposefully, the tower rises directly above the dome. From the interior atrium, one has no sense of the tower's presence. Indeed, a 'dome room' is slided between usable tower and block, allowing daylight to enter under the tower's skirt. Framed in steel and with small floor plates, the tower features V-shaped bay lobby windows. It houses offices, and initially it provided space for expansion. Its top floor is a quintessential Prairie-style room detailed with banks of high clerestory windows. Interior space flows outward beneath the ornamental terra cotta soffits of abstract foliage. A narrow outside promenade permits observation of the city from above. In all its strangeness, the tower constitutes a unique addition to the history of high-rise form.

Besides the obvious prestige that size and civic function confer, Woodbury County Courthouse is a rare example of urban Prairie School. As such it is instructive, for Purcell and Elmslie are known largely for their single-family houses, and the major monuments of the Prairie School are mostly, though not exclusively, suburban. Indeed, one senses a potential contradiction between the theory of Prairie School design and a commission for an authoritative building situated in the middle of the man-made, gridded American city. For how to remain true to the fundamental principles of that style while at the same time addressing an urban situation and central-authority program for which the style is, at best, questionably suited? Wright and Sullivan, persistent sources for the School's formal preferences, offered various approaches as precedent: Sullivan's decorated high-rises, the Charnley House, Unity Temple, and most obviously the 'urban' banks of Sullivan and Wright's small bank/hotel combo in Mason City. However, the sheer size of the courthouse, its established building-type parti, and its program as architectural manifestation of central governmental authority, suggest such approaches irrelevant. More comparable are Richardson's renowned courthouses (Sioux City's adjacent City Hall is Richardsonian Romanesque as are many of its finer monuments), and Henry Hombostel's then-popular Oakland City Hall (1911-14). Both combine tower and block to symbolize, though in very different ways, the conjunction of laissez-faire business and governmental authority.

In a similar manner, city block and tower are combined in the Woodbury County Courthouse though its fabric is decidedly Prairie School. Of a yellowish glazed Roman brick, it eschews the muscularity of traditional granites and marbles. The earth of Sioux City, not the stones of antiquity, has built this building. In contradistinction to the overall formal symmetries of its composition, the courthouse 'grows' from its site, this the result of how the building meets the ground, stretches itself to turn a corner, and how its brick detailing and terra cotta ornament massage the complex
As with many Prairie School buildings, its rhetoric is often representational: mottoes are embossed on the building; John Norton's rather stiff murals adorn an elevated main lobby clearly distinguished by a glass dome; and the relief sculptures of the Chicagoan Alfonzo Iannelli signify the two principal entries — thresholds that mark the transition between the outer urban environment and the sanctity of a distinctly interior world. Together with an abundance of terra cotta capitals and surrounds, each of these representational devices serves to both color the building 'Prairie' and speak a traditional formal language. Thus while Iannelli's reliefs elevate entries to meaningful thresholds between an outer world of commerce and an inner world of ecclesiastical-like justice (the principal relief is remarkably religious: a looming, bearded, colossal flanked by twelve human-scale disciples), they also reinforce an expected symmetry and construe as façade what otherwise might be only elevation. Terra cotta capitals cloak the building in the Jeffersonian governmental garb. Simultaneously, these capitals organically ease the transition between vertical and horizontal on the exterior while imbuing the lobby interior with a sense of the exotic. There is, too, the authority of the main façade's elaborate colonnade — again an accoutrement of temple origin, but one essential to this building type. Not of Greek cylinders but rectangular and brick, the colonnade possesses all the power of symbolic structure. At the same time, it suggests itself as an expressionistic and organic extension of the brick block, veiling the building's face while conveying some sense of its twentieth-century structuring.

Since 1991, the Des Moines firm of Wetherell, Ericsson, Leusink has meticulously restored this little-known masterpiece of Prairie School design — the largest civic structure ever produced in that idiom. It is to their credit that the Woodbury County Courthouse, at one time neglected and unappreciated and suffering from inevitable updates, is today the pride of Sioux City. More importantly and to their very great credit, presently, when visiting this edifice, one enters not a facsimile museum piece — a too tidy blast-from-the-past that looks as if it were built yesterday — but a working building, a courthouse that functions well on a daily basis and is a Prairie School masterpiece as well. That is to say, in Sioux City, a delicate and subtle restoration has resulted in a hardly noticeable renewal. The temporal dimension has been encouraged to stay. Neither age nor aura has been erased. Everything is as it was; but exquisite care, inherent intelligence, and an unusual amount of empathy have ensured that the presence of the past supports the needs of today and of the future.

In the now-past age of high modernism, a building that combined tartan with Cartesian grid, steel frame with bearing wall construction, urban design with suburban philosophy, and the preestablished formal expressions of Prairie School with those of the traditional courthouse type, could hardly have been fully appreciated. Today, however, the resolution of such apparent contradiction in a seamless work of undeniable genius is valued for its complexity, authenticity, and craft; for its relentless assertion of its beliefs, and for the unique quality of its rooms and spaces. That the artifact is so magnificently restored is reason enough to visit Sioux City; that its convictions have again found favor insists that it not be left unnoticed.

—Daniel Naegle's writings on representation, architectural photography, and modern architecture and art have been published in the U.S., England, and New Zealand, and have been translated to Danish, Italian, French, and Spanish. Dan is an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at Iowa State University.
The effect of mass, of static solidity, hitherto the prime quality of architecture, has all but disappeared; in its place there is an effect of volume, or more accurately, of plane surfaces bounding a volume.

—Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, 1932

Right: Modern architecture in its perfect natural setting with light emanating from the building and reflected in the pond reveals the calm serenity of finely composed lines.

When Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson penned those words (at left) for the 1932 International Style Exhibit at the New York Museum of Modern Art, they correctly predicted that twentieth-century architecture would be vastly different from all previous epochs. That turbulent era is now history and the designs that emanated from that period will forever shape the course of architecture.

The century that brought forth design brilliance also gave us technological advances that altered human perception and interaction. Modern computer technology allows us to vicariously travel the world and experience the planet from safe and comfortable environs. The disconcerting paradox is that this digital road trip can both expand our knowledge and limit personal human interaction. The more we know about the world and the complexities of modern life — and the consequences of repeatedly stretching our limits to the failsafe point — eventually enables us to redirect our energy towards the true meaning of the global village.

Architecture is often referred to as the school of art that utilizes many strands of artistic talent. In its many varied aspects, architecture can provide a societal common ground and establish a communal atmosphere for individuals to experience the past. At the Visitor Center/Hall of Fame at the University of Iowa, modern architecture and technology are combined to enable the individual to appreciate the significance of distant times.

At the firm of Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck (HLKB) Architecture, principal in charge Rod Kruse, FAIA, and project architect Jill Swanson, AIA, designed a modern three-story, 24,000-square-foot building as part of a university master plan to pull the campus westward. The
The carefully altered modern box of industrial materials is prominent on the midwestern grasslands.

RCH SHAW/ PETER BLESSING
peculiar siting of the center in literally the middle of nowhere is the consequence of the current absence of a planned yet unbuilt athletic facility to enclose tennis courts and swimming facilities. The Visitor Center design was actually predicated on the plans for the much larger building and thus would have appeared to be a mediating element in context with the dominant facility. At this point, however, the center definitely appears as an isolated object on landscape.

The programmatic requirements included space to display the history and success of Iowa Hawkeye athletics, general university information, meeting and conference spaces, a retail store, and a location for receptions and other public events related to the institution.

The overall aesthetic employed is a successful compilation of the building vocabulary perfected by the architects for many of its most prominent works. The same design and structural clarity utilized for the Praxair Distribution, Sicks, Inc., M.C. Ginsberg (Works of Art), Meredith Corporation, and numerous other HLB projects is fully apparent in this university design.

The building is essentially a slightly altered glass, steel, and concrete box with gridded walls creating a transparent effect to expose a multitude of layered levels of structural elements. A diffused lighted bridge walkway leads to the entry and a three-story atrium at the southwest corner. A full height curtain wall reveals the staircase lines that present a strong geometric contrast to the grid.

The only significant deviation from the basic structure is the cascading standing seam steel roof extending and folding over to create variation along the western elevation and providing protection from the afternoon sun. The eastern elevation, however, is fully transparent with diagonals on the second and third levels creating an interesting visual counterpoint to the window grids. It is through this wall that the expressive clarity of elements and connections is most pronounced. If the twentieth-century taught architects one concept, it was that there is pure aesthetic delight in the design of structure — Adolf Loos was correct. The effect of plane surfaces bounding a volume as proclaimed by Hitchcock and Johnson is fully utilized in the center's design as the building is part of the continuing evolution of modernism.

The Visitor Center is certainly visually appealing and exemplifies the best qualities of modern design. The exterior is a taut skin wrapped around equally impressive interior spaces that fulfill the program requirements and represent the finest aspects of modern design. The main floor consists of a full-length/full-height gallery along the east elevation with two conference rooms and a retail store occupying the western section. These rooms are clad in soft toned maple wood veneers and are separated by a massive maple clad pivoting door. The juxtaposition of wood against concrete and steel elements still works after decades of architects composing these materials in such a manner. Completing the main floor functions are the Hawkeye Shop Retail Store, catering kitchen for the many public functions, and ticket and office spaces. The striking three-story atrium now displays the Hall of Fame plaques formerly located in Carver Hall.

The second and third levels look out over the gallery and are composed of buffed concrete floors with stone
inlay and exposed hollow core roof sections. Bridge walkways on both levels provide access to several interactive touch pad kiosks, university history exhibits and sports displays categorized by activity type. Two large scale glass panels of approximately six by ten feet with athletic scenes etched onto the surface are positioned on the third level bridge walk. It is on these two levels that the individual is able to employ modern technology through the use of interactive kiosks to explore the history of the university and understand the unique traits that have made it one of the finest educational institutions in the nation.

Connecting to the social landscape through both modern technology and human interaction is a precarious balancing act that can be accomplished only with experience and constant learning. Centering oneself in an educational environment creates a deepening sense of history and pride. Acknowledging the people and events that have come before, and to take on the responsibilities of the present, has always been the goal of humanity. If technology and architecture can help in that endeavor, then combining the finest of each seems rather appropriate.

—Mark Blunck has expanded his mid-century modern furniture collection and is in desperate need of more spacious living quarters. Next endeavor — Memphis Design.

Top left: The internal roofline created by the angled standing seam steel roof is located above large custom etched glass panels illustrating university athletics.

Top right: A juxtaposition of materials is shown by maple millwork, glass, exposed concrete roofs, and buffed concrete floors.

Bottom left: A multiple internal layering of structural elements and finish work is seen with the diagonal bracing providing a nice contrast to the grid.

Bottom right: The main floor conference rooms are clad in light maple millwork and separated by a large matching pivoting door.
History with a spin
PELLA WINDMILL/INTERPRETIVE CENTER

The idea of being “centered” suggests balance. And the Pella Windmill/Interpretive Center balances past and present, old world and new world — even form and function. It’s a blend of authentic Dutch details with American adaptation...fitting for a community that is at once proud of its roots as well as its midwestern way of life.

As the point of entry into the Pella Historical Society’s Historical Village, the mill and interpretive center clearly communicate Pella’s Dutch heritage. To make the project as authentic as possible, Wetherell Ericsson Leusink Architects of Des Moines traveled to Holland to study a host of windmills, villages and works of Dutch architecture. “We simply tried to reflect as nearly as possible what we observed firsthand,” says project architect Larry Ericsson, AIA.

Authentic exterior details range from varying styles of brick to cream-colored plaster stucco and dark green windows and doors with white trim. Wood floors, Dutch lace curtains and Delft tiles reflect Dutch style inside the center. Guides in authentic costume also interpret aspects of Dutch life for visitors, including a demonstration of how the grain mill operates.

Lukas Verbij, a third-generation windmill designer from the Netherlands, designed the wooden portion of the windmill. Nothing is motorized; it’s powered purely by wind through an intricate design. Operating the mill is an art for the volunteers who run it — from the countless ways the canvas sails on the blades can be trimmed to capture the wind to the way the 25-ton cap can be rotated 360 degrees to position the blades into the wind by laboriously cranking a “ship’s wheel” from the platform.

The upper portion of the mill was fabricated in Holland and shipped loose in containers to Pella, where The Weitz Company assembled the top and cap and lifted them into place by crane. Several Dutch craftsmen from the windmill designer and fabricator’s shops came to Pella and were instrumental in the assembly process as well.

At a height of 125 feet to the uppermost edge of the blades, the mill is the tallest actual working, authentic Dutch windmill in the United States. Because it’s located in the center of Pella, designers added an additional story to the foundation to allow the blades to rise above surrounding buildings and catch the wind.

A major challenge in this project was maintaining an authentic look of the past with today’s functional requirements. To accommodate visitors with disabilities, for example, architects used themes from medieval structures they saw in Holland to create an elevator tower with a boardwalk to the operating platform of the mill.

Project: Windmill/Interpretive Center
Location: Pella, IA
Architect: Wetherell Ericsson Leusink Architects, PLC
Contractor: The Weitz Company
Electrical contractor: De Vries Electric, Inc.
Electrical Engineer: Pulley & Associates, Inc.
Structural Engineer: Peterson Engineers
Mechanical Contractor: Dahl Air Conditioning
Photographer: Larry Ericsson
According to Ericsson, Wetherell Ericsson Leusink also worked closely with Dutch designers to make the windmill comply with U.S. building codes. Elements such as fire-rated stairs and stainless steel cable supplementing the traditional low rail around the 40-foot-high platform were necessary. Lightning protection for the blades was also added. "There were so many things that we had to research and learn," Ericsson recalls. "The complexities of this mill are incredible."

Beyond bringing aesthetics and functionality together, the project brought a community together. As one guide put it, they watched "history in the making"... adding another chapter to the story these structures were built to tell.

—Camille Campbell-Wolfe wonders why Dutch letters are never made in any shape but "S." As a copywriter for a Des Moines ad agency, she sees definite marketing potential there.
Chiropractic philosophy is based on the idea that our bodies have an inherent ability to maintain health. Chiropractic practices are holistic — they address our diet, activity patterns, heredity, and daily environments. The crux of chiropractic practice is the adjustment between the spinal column and the nervous system, between the structural and functional systems of our body. Chiropractic adjustments are at the intersection of our health, wellness, and management of our internal and external environments.

The Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research, designed by Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck (HLKB) Architecture, ably negotiates changes in programmatic function within a fixed structural system. The project, completed in September 2002, resides in an existing residential apartment building in Davenport. The inherited cast-in-place structural frame, modest floor plate size, and tight vertical dimensions presented unique design challenges as well as opportunities — opportunities that are often part of adaptive re-use projects. Similar to chiropractic practices, adaptive re-use projects adjust functional and structural relationships in a complex set of social, physical, and ideological environments.

The project required five levels and 27,000 square feet of extensive remodeling to achieve the transformation of a residential apartment building into a research center with laboratories, offices, and classrooms. The stairs and elevator were removed and replaced. The mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems were removed and bolstered with the addition of a rooftop mechanical complex. While the constraints of structural bays and vertical dimensions limited spatial possibilities, design of the exterior, in relationship to the function of the building, resulted in the exterior expression of programmatic elements; a metal “skin” covers the animal laboratories on the upper levels, a discrete parapet structure conceals the rooftop mechanical system, and a glass curtain wall system encloses the original exterior and cantilevered balconies on the north-facing side of the building. The resulting enclosures provide environmentally controlled corridors between offices, laboratories, classrooms, and service spaces.

The environment of Palmer College — both built and inhabited — emulates chiropractic practices, the adjustment between structure and function in the context of a complex set of factors relating to health, well-being, and community. Just as chiropractic practices consider diet, activity, environment, and heredity, architectural practices consider cost, social organization, material resources, and
pre-existing constraints and conditions of our environment. In addition, in this instance, adaptive re-use expedited construction, mirrored available funding, and allowed timely continuation and development of research, instruction, and services. The design provides the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research a place in which to center and conduct a wide range of programs and services that are part of Palmer College. HLKB’s design for the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research, like our body, is more than just a sum of parts — it is a holistic response addressing a broad set of environmental, ideological, and organizational conditions. Adaptive re-use projects, like chiropractic practices, are all too often at the margin of professional practice. Imagine how healthy our environment would be if all architectural projects integrated some form of chiropractic practices.

—Clare Robinson is an assistant professor at Iowa State University.
The John Chrystal Center provides a new front door for incoming students and their families at Grinnell College. Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck (HLKB) Architecture provided Grinnell with a single building to house 26,000 square feet of office and commons space for admissions, financial aid, and registrar functions, while addressing directly broader issues of presentation and entry on a gateway site. Located at the southwest corner of the Grinnell campus, the Chrystal Center is actually across the street from the college proper, set on a prime entry corner and nestled among a half dozen residential structures converted to academic use. In particular, its neighbor to the immediate north, Nollen House, is a richly detailed Queen Anne style building now containing Grinnell’s main administrative offices. The Chrystal Center is, therefore, a ‘center’ at the periphery, understandably detached from daily student life (except when financial aid checks arrive), and deferring in its siting to other ‘centers’ of college activity, in particular the Forum building across campus, which serves as Grinnell’s self-proclaimed ‘living room.’

The Forum is one of a number of buildings at Grinnell designed by Walter Netsch of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Since 1961, his Bucksbaum Center for the Arts has dominated the southwest entry to Grinnell’s campus, along with his adjacent library building, constructed in 1959 and extended upward by Weese Hickey Weese in 1982. The refined austerity of these buildings presented HLKB with a radically different contextual palette from the Chrystal Center’s domestically scaled neighbors. Further complicating the site’s references, a string of more historic buildings continues north from the Bucksbaum Center, including the particularly Richardsonian Goodnow building, completed in 1885 by Massachusetts architect Stephen Earle, and the collegiate gothic Herrick Chapel (1907).

Finding an appropriate middle ground between the domestic scale of Park Street and the larger scale of Grinnell’s main campus was the Chrystal Center’s major challenge. The building’s overall form recalls the gables and pitched roofs of the nearby houses, and its shed roof adds a finely grained rhythm that matches the shingles and timber siding next door. Its low, long two-story mass defers in particular to Nollen House while recalling the two demolished houses on whose lots it stands. Likewise, its frontage along Park Street suggests the overhang of a Craftsman or Victorian front porch, albeit significantly longer, asymmetrical and rendered in steel sections rather than wood. From the south, the building is divided into four bands — the porch, and two

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**Project:** John Chrystal Center  
**Location:** Grinnell, IA  
**Architect:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture  
**General Contractor:** Neumonn Brothers, Inc.  
**Electrical Contractor:** Baker Electric  
**Mechanical Contractor:** The Waldinger Corporation  
**Masonry Contractor:** Forrest & Associates  
**Civil Engineer:** Clapsaddle Garber  
**Electrical Engineer:** Baker Electric  
**Mechanical Engineer:** The Waldinger Corporation  
**Structural Engineer:** Charles Saul Engineering  
**Landscape Architect:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture  
**Interior Designer:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture  
**Photographer:** Bob Shimer/Hedrich Blessing

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**THOMAS LESLIE, AIA**
The roof of the center’s ‘porch’ is an off-center gable roof, again combining steel structure with a warm wood ceiling.
Above: From the west (rear) elevation, the Chrystal Center is a clearly articulated set of four office masses, rendered in Iowa limestone. The grain of the elevation was developed to recall the scale of the houses previously on the site, and to tie in to the domestic scale of the neighborhood.

Right: The interior of the Chrystal Center’s ‘porch’ moves visitors upstairs to a reception area, while student services are located on the first floor, beyond. Prospective students are greeted at the top of the stairs with a panoramic view of the campus.

Far right: Within the offices, the blend of native materials and crisply detailed steel systems gently contrasts the local with the abstract, hinting at the building’s social and programmatic balance.

limestone-clad office bays flanking a glass opening. This intermediate glass bay is emphasized by an additional story of shed roof — somewhat oddly opening away from the main campus. Inside, the ‘porch’ opens up to provide a two-story entry hall to the offices beyond. New arrivals and prospective students enter from the south, and are met by a generous stair that deposits them at the second floor reception area with a panoramic view of the campus across the street. Students seeking their loan checks enter from the north, scooting under the second floor reception area to a service counter out of view from the upper floor. The porch’s roof is a delicate weaving together of steel structure with a wood ceiling, blending materials and scales to form a space that serves the dual purpose of dignifying the procedural entrance to campus and adding a reassuring touch of scale and warmth.

One can, of course, read the porch in two ways. It is most obviously a formal nod to the other porches of Park Street, no doubt a familiar gesture to new students from towns throughout the Midwest. However it is oriented to the nearby modernist buildings of Netsch, and its palette and detailing are resolutely contemporary. In a sense it refocuses the visitor on the collection of late modernist buildings across the street, after welcoming them with familiar suggestions of domesticity and comfort. This sleight of hand is in some measure what Grinnell sets out to do with its students, namely to point them toward the world from the comforts of rural Iowa. Recent work at the college has struggled with attempts to replicate, reference, or mimic the mix of Richardsonian Romanesque and collegiate Gothic to hand. Underlying its contextual response to the houses of Park Street, the Chrystal Center finds a measure of continuity with the postwar work of Netsch, and softens his abstract though well-scaled formalism with a mix of vernacular references, warm materials, and finely grained rhythms.

To break its mass down to the scale of its residential neighbors, the Chrystal Center has a cross grain that divides the building into four major programmatic divisions, perpendicular to the logic suggested by the south elevation. These four slices each contain pairs of offices along their west edge, and shared workspace they cross under the shed roof. Where they meet at the porch, the four bays contain varying functions — offices, toilets, work areas, and the reception and service counters noted previously. This last pair of functions called out by a gabled roof over the porch, which ends being off-center in the main elevation. This is a powerful move, one that hints at the forms of the neighboring houses while — intentionally or not — picking up the asymmetrical massing of the Netsch buildings and the Romanesque examples across the street.

While the four-bay articulation is powerful, presented on the west elevation, it fades somewhat in the intricate steel structure of the porch. This subtlety in blending of vernacular and formal, domestic and institutional, abstract and representational suggests a challenge Grinnell faces in reconciling its diverse collection of buildings. Compounding the camp wildly varied set of architectural prerogatives, the Chrystal Center presents a set of further, programmatic contradictions — a ‘center’ on the periphery, a ‘welcome’ that begins an intellectually and culturally challenging experience, and the presentation of a small town, liberal arts college with an international reputation. In placing the building between the particulars of the site and the broader aspirations of Grinnell’s mission, HLBK chose a careful weaving of forms, materials and spaces rather than a mere pastiche. The Chrystal Center’s discovery of common ground in the masses and construction of nineteenth century houses, college buildings, and their modernist neighbors suggests an architectural center to match the administrative program.

—Thomas Leslie is an assistant professor of architecture, Iowa State University.
Left: A view of the open office spaces underneath the west-facing shed roof. The material palette of the porch continues through the second floor ceiling.

BOB SHYER / HEDRICH BLESSING
Courtroom drama

STORY COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER SUCCEEDS IN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER — AND WHEN NEEDED, KEEPING THEM APART

Story County's new justice center — a structure designed with strict security, circulation and expandability issues — expands the county's courts, law enforcement and jail facilities in a cutting-edge design.

Below: Taking stylistic cues from Story County's other facilities, AWKS used dark brick for the new justice center and salvaged a huge granite monolith etched with the scales of justice.

B ringing jail inmates in close contact with juries, judges, attorneys, and the public can — and does — cause combustible situations. For its new justice center in Nevada, Story County officials hired Architects Wells Kastner Schipper (AWKS) to develop a plan that solved this and other challenges inherent in projects like these.

"Security was just a huge emphasis," says project architect Brent Schipper, AIA. At this, the firm's third project for Story County in the past five years, AWKS created a building that ensures a totally separate circulation system for inmates, who move throughout the building's three distinct components — the sheriff's office, the jail, and the courts.

Inside the two-story courts facility, the five courtrooms are grouped together in the core of the building (the first floor has two courtrooms, the second floor has three). The courtrooms' main access doors open to the east corridors. The west corridors, just behind the courts, house the judges' offices and jurors' meeting rooms. Judges and jurors each have their own courtroom access doors. Inmates move back and forth from the courts to the jail by way of a secure corridor with direct access to the courtrooms.

AWKS has incorporated the security and expandability into a functional, yet visually striking building that is anchored by a wall of stainless steel 'scales' that bisects the section of the building that contains the court facilities. The wall runs perpendicular to the north-south orientation of the building, relating the entire structure to the side street from which most of the building is visible. The wall continues into the interior of the building, where people walking up the main grand steel staircase can touch the scales. The interior spaces are highlighted by metallic light fixtures and hardware, light woodwork with clean edges, and neutral colors.

Schipper says the county is open to cutting-edge design, but likes to see its buildings tied together thematically. So, on the exterior, AWKS brought in

Project: Story County Justice Center
Location: Nevada, IA
Architect: Architects Wells Kastner Schipper
General Contractor: Woodruff Construction
Civil Engineer: Snyder and Associates
Electrical Engineer: KJWW Engineering Consultants
Mechanical Engineer: KJWW Engineering Consultants
Structural Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering
Landscape Architect: Snyder and Associates
Interior Designer: Architects Wells Kastner Schipper
Photographer: Timothy Hursley

ERIC GAUKEL
elements from the county's old courthouse, a modern 1960's building that no longer had the space required to serve the county's justice functions, and which is now being renovated to house county administrative offices.

The main design element that carries over from the old building is the dark brick. The entrance of the new building incorporates an actual relic from the old building - a monolithic slab of granite, more than 20 feet tall, etched with an image of the scales of justice and the words "Story County Court House."

The narrow, black steel columns that wrap the front of the justice center provide a modern response to the bulky, ornate columns found on many of Iowa's court-

The new building, because of its security features, has already taken one high-profile court case - the Meskwaki Casino dispute - away from the old courthouse in Tama County.

—Erich Gaukel is the editor of New Horizons magazine.
Forwards looking back

CITIZENS' COMMUNITY CENTER CONNECTS HUXLEY WITH ITS PAST AND ITS FUTURE

Above: By placing everything from a gymnasium and fitness center to Huxley's city council chambers all under one roof the building is able to take on a grander sense of mass and importance in the community.

Right: With the use of stainless steel on the wall, random lights and a floating staircase, the lobby of the Citizens' Community Center in Huxley is more statement than the kind of place you sit down to chat with neighbors.

But the statement that Brent Schipper and his team at Architects Wells Kastner Schipper wanted to make with the lobby — as well as the rest of the Citizens, Community Center — was a fairly grand one. It's the apex of not just a small town looking to grow, but an entire rural community that spreads for miles beyond Huxley city limits. And like a heart, that community pumps through that entryway and off to its various destinations: a library, a gymnasium, a fitness center, city offices, and even council chambers.

“We took the lobby space and organized everything around it,” Schipper says. “When you’re in that space you’re connected with everything. You can see it all. You’re a part of everything. And that’s why the material we choose (the stainless steel) is something different to denote that. We wanted to set it off by itself — show it was connected to everything, but also its own entity.”

It’s the underlying premise of the whole building. While the community center houses a diverse collection of spaces, all denoted in their own way, Schipper wanted everything under one roof to give the whole a sense of mass and importance. “When you’re a small city like Huxley, you can put these things together and make them more important for the community,” he says.

The team also wanted the building to be both a combination of the familiar and the futuristic. It’s why brick runs into steel; traditional shapes collide with the outlandish. It’s why much of the building mimics the town’s agricultural ties, adopting the economy and look of agrarian structures, but applying them in unconventional ways. It’s no mistake that the back of the community center looks like a massive machine shed. The fact that the siding is made of zinc, though, means it will outlive anything in the fields.

While connected to the pre-existing Ballard High School, Schipper wanted the community center to both reflect the older building — thus a mimicking of the...
Iowa's use of courtyards in the corridor joining the two structures — as well as stand on its own visually. By placing the arcing and smooth racket ball court, a story and a half structure covered in stainless steel shingles, between the existing school and the new center, Schipper basically came up with a giant arrow that points your eye right at that linear lobby.

"The racket ball court just didn't fit in with the rest of the building," he says, "so we decided to pull it out and make it something special. Plus, those less rigid forms really help draw you up to the main building."

In its own way, it allows Huxley to show off for a little while. "The city of Huxley is trying to show that it's competitive with the other small suburbs, show it's a place to build and grow," Schipper says. "And from a design aspect, show that they're top of the line and give the community the best that they can. I think that alone says a lot about the town."

—Jeff Inman is a freelance writer based in Des Moines.

Top: The racket ball court and adjoining lounge area provide a visual guide that takes you right into the community center's distinctive lobby.

Left: Combining traditional shapes and agrarian economy with occasional unconventional forms and materials, the Citizens' Community Center is a statement about Huxley's past and its intentions for the future.

Bottom: Though seemingly randomly placed, the windows along the elevated track are meant to have the rhythm of a runner and each allows joggers a different view outside.
Construction is underway for an addition to the existing City Recreation Center in North Liberty. Designed by SVPA Architects, Inc. with pool design consultants, Larkin Aquatic, the additions are to include a full-size competition gym and indoor pool along with an exterior pool with water amenities. Additional consultants include Grauer Consulting for mechanical and electrical engineering, and Neumann-Monson, structural engineering. The additions will add approximately 76,600 square foot of recreation space to the existing center.

Shive-Hattery in Iowa City is working with the Iowa City Community School District and City High School to add 15 new classrooms, a fitness center, and student commons, totaling 44,000 square feet. Also included is the renovation of the existing media center. The project will create a new link between the classroom spaces and athletic center, improving circulation and accessibility issues while also addressing fire safety and security concerns.

The addition fills a void on the east side of the building; therefore, the brick and limestone façade was designed to blend with the existing facility. The commons area will provide a contrasting, contemporary space with clerestory windows designed to bring daylight into the space and adjacent classrooms. HVAC systems will include energy efficient geothermal heat pumps.

Designed by the Howard R. Green Company, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Mt. Pleasant Public Library will be the main occupant of the newly refurbished Senior High School building. The abandoned building, of 70,000 square foot owned by the City of Mt. Pleasant, is being gutted and rebuilt to house a new 25,000-square-foot public library, a community theatre in a restored auditorium seating 350, new community meeting rooms seating 200, and offices for both the Area Education Agency and the school district. Additionally, the existing gymnasium is being renovated for a community activity center. The only new portion of the building will be an entrance for the public library. The exterior design of this entrance will reflect the historical elements that give Mt. Pleasant its special character.
Great vision precedes great achievement

An architectural educator, practitioner, and currently serving as one of the vice-presidents at the national level of the American Institute of Architects, Kate Schwennsen, FAIA, was awarded the highest level of recognition given by the AIA Iowa Chapter: The Medal of Honor. This award, announced at the 2003 AIA Iowa Convention, was given to recognize her "distinguished service to the community and architectural profession." So what is there left to do after winning the Medal of Honor? If you are Kate Schwennsen, FAIA, you prepare to be a candidate for 2005 first vice president at the 2004 AIA National Convention in Chicago. If successful, Ms. Schwennsen will then be the 2006 president of the national American Institute of Architects, an accomplishment yet to be achieved by a fellow architect from Iowa. Kate Schwennsen is the embodiment of the spirit Woodrow Wilson was referring to when he said, "You are not here merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world." We wish Kate the very best in her career quests.

The door is always open

An educator once articulated the roles of a teacher and a student: "Teachers open doors, you enter by yourself." From time to time, the local profession of architecture salutes an outstanding educator for his or her substantial and significant contribution to architectural education with the AIA Iowa Educator Award. At the recent 2003 AIA Iowa Convention, this award was presented to Iowa State University associate professor Clare Cardinal-Pett for her abundant influence on the quality of education for aspiring young architects. Ms. Cardinal-Pett has been inspirational in opening the doors through which many of us entered the architectural profession. In addition to this award, we owe Clare our gratitude.

"The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas."

You may not readily recall the architect's name, Richard Upjohn. Born in England, he was a leader in the Gothic Revival movement in America during the mid-1800s. Although responsible for the Trinity Church at the head of Wall Street in Manhattan, his buildings are not what he is remembered for most. His true legacy is that he helped found the American Institute of Architects, and was its first president for the initial 19 years of existence. It seems Mr. Upjohn was astutely aware of the rewards of collaboration, the sharing of ideas, and the power of a collective voice. An award has recently been developed in his name, the Richard Upjohn Fellows Medal, honoring those who have been instrumental in the leadership of the AIA. The Central States Region recently held an awards ceremony to honor past contributors to the profession in our region and our state was well represented. Receiving Richard Upjohn Fellows Medals from Iowa are Robert C. Broschar, FAIA; H. Kenneth Bussard, FAIA; Thomas R. Clause, FAIA; Dale H. McKinney, AIA; Gregory Palermo, FAIA; Suzanne K. Schwengels; Hon. AIA, CAE; and Katherine L. Schwennsen, FAIA. Congratulations to you all and thank you for your many contributions of ideas, experiences and expertise in making the profession what it is today.

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Correction: Issue No. 03:244
Page 30, Clause Architects: Lake, Iowa should not be listed under the logo.
Page 36, HLM Design: The two correct captions and photos are as follows:

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa. Photo by Robert Schinzer, Hedrich-Blessing.

Page 36, InVision Architecture: The three correct captions and photos are as follows:

Dr. Walter Cunningham School for Excellence, Waterloo, Iowa. Photo by Dale Photographics.

Lied Multipurpose Complex—Iowa School for the Deaf, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Photo by Mark Mickunas Architectural Photography.

Page 43, Rohrbach Carlson, P.C.: The image of Iowa City Cancer Care and the Carver Biomedical Research Building are renderings by Rohrbach Carlson.

Issue No. 03:245
Page 24, Aerodynamism: Des Moines Area Community College—West Campus Facility.

The credits should have been:
General contractor, Taylor Ball; Electrical contractor, DeVries Electric; Mechanical contractor, L.A. Fulton; Electrical engineer, KJWW Engineering Consultants; Mechanical engineer, KJWW Engineering Consultants; Structural engineer, Dennis & Magnani Structural Consultants; Landscape architect, RDG Cross Gardner Shukert; Interior designer, RDG Planning + Design; Energy design consultant, The Weidt Group; Photographer, Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions
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