

inform

Architecture + Design
in the Mid-Atlantic

1997: number three

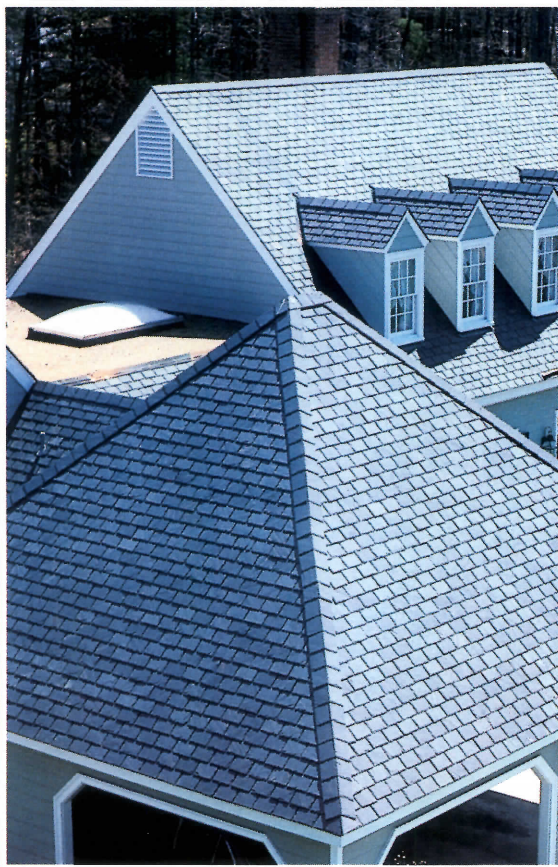
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Burgundy Farm Country Day School ■ Sixth Annual Inform Awards ■ Henry Mercer and Fonthill ■ Ralph Adams Cram at Richmond ■ Art Deco

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(Inset) Robert E. Payne, Architect, Richmond, VA
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(Above) Roy P. Harrover and Associates, F.A.I.A., Architect
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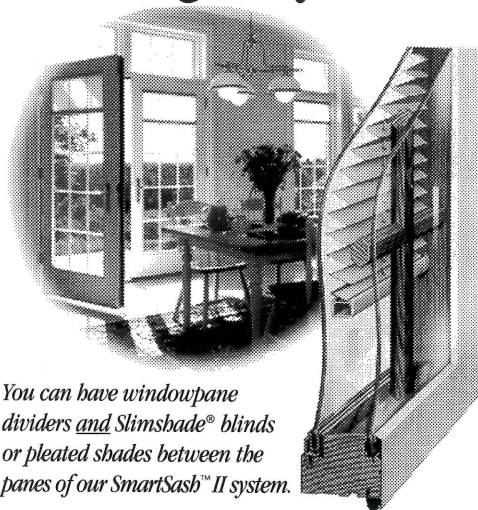
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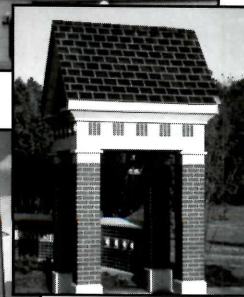
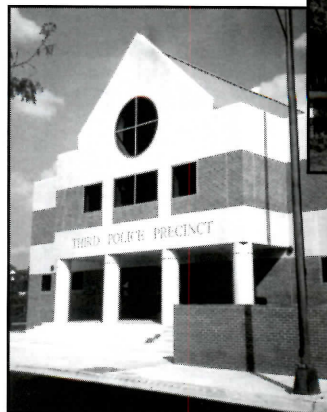
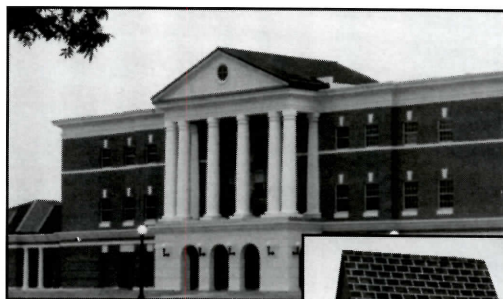
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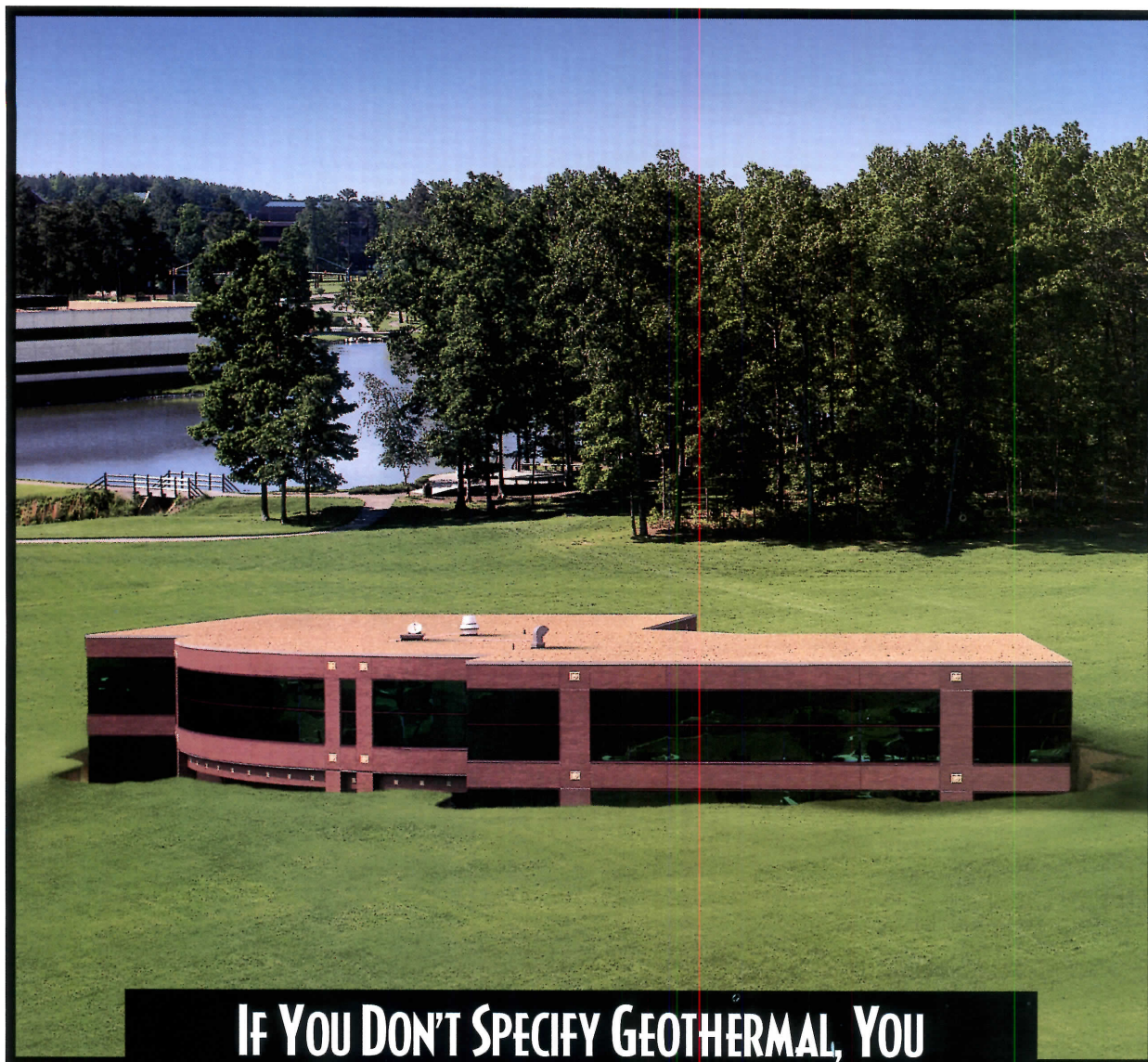
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Deep in the Woods

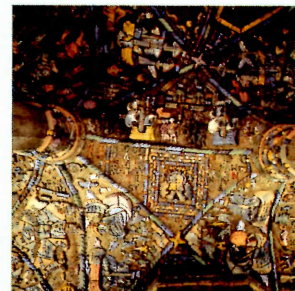
For a school that stresses respect for nature, the idea of building an addition in the woods generated a little uneasiness. In the end, architects James Ritter and Joanne Goldfarb expanded the Burgundy Farm Country Day School without compromising the site. *By Ed Guntz*

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Inform Awards: A Wealth of Excellence

A wide range of design solutions emerged as winners in the sixth annual Inform Awards program. Eighteen projects earned the jury's seal of approval from a total of 93 submissions comprised of interiors, objects, and landscapes.

Sextet Furniture, Christos Saccopoulos
Lucent Kiosk, Greenwell Goetz Architects
Science Treehouse Exhibit Design, Hands On! with Edwin Pease, AIA
The Museum Stool, Thomas S. Shiner, AIA
Farmer's Market Shelter, Wagner Murray Architects
Levine/Moore House, Jeffrey Levine, AIA
Terkowitz Residence, Michael Vergason Landscape Architects
National Minority AIDS Council, CORE
MYCOM Directors' Offices, Williams & Dynerman Architects
United States Olympic Training Center, Lehman Smith Wiseman
SEC Hearing Room, Greenwell Goetz Architects
Porter/Novelli Offices, CORE
Huntsville Golf Club, Michael Vergason Landscape Architects
Raku: An Asian Diner, Adamstein & Demetriou Architects
Exhibit Design: Olmec Art, National Gallery of Art
Reporters Building, Weinstein Associates Architects
Forbes Residence and Gardens, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA
Top Treasures Case, George Sexton Associates



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the continuing delights of Art Deco

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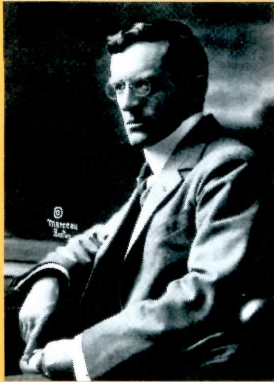


Taking Note

doing the small thing well

On the cover:
Raku: An Asian Diner.
Photo by
Theo Adamstein.

In our next issue:
Emerging Talent

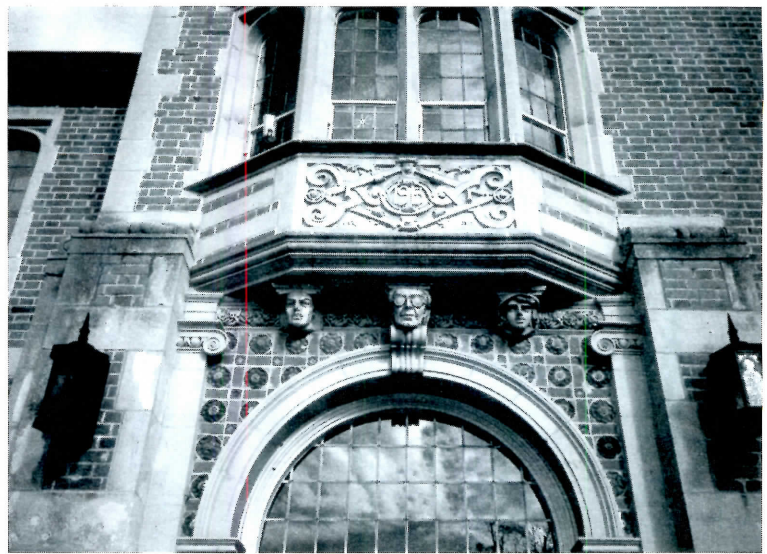


Cram:

By Edwin Slipek, Jr.

Richmonders have long had an appreciation for the combined power of the architecture of William Lawrence Bottomley and the landscape design of Charles Gillette. Today we add the name of Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942), whose career was a bridge spanning the Victorian and Modern eras. In 1910, at the peak of his powers, Cram was engaged to design the new campus for Richmond College and its coordinate institution, Westhampton College.

His path to Richmond was an illustrious one. After writing as an art critic for *The Boston Evening Transcript*, Cram returned to architecture by opening his office in Boston with Charles Wentworth. Architect Bertram Goodhue joined them shortly thereafter. The firm's breakthrough church commission was All Saints Ashmont, an Episcopal church near Boston. With its success, other church commissions came to the firm, including two in New York: Saint Thomas Church in 1907 and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 1911. It was winning the 1902 competition to design West Point, however, that won the firm Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson national attention. With its Gothic proposal, the firm beat out others who worked in the Beaux Arts style. After receiving the West Point commission, Cram was appointed supervising architect at Princeton. There he attempted to organize the Princeton grounds along an axial plan with a Medieval arrangement of quads.



Among Cram's original buildings at the university is the refectory, Sarah Brunet Hall.

Perpetuation of the Gothic at Richmond College

In Richmond College's President Frederic W. Boatwright, Cram would receive his best opportunity to create a medieval cloister. Ever since allowing Richmond College to admit women, Boatwright had visited a number of Midwestern colleges to see how they dealt with coeducation. In 1910, he asked Cram to plan a campus on 293 acres in suburban Richmond. Because of the rugged character of the site, a formal building configuration in the Beaux Arts planning tradition was impractical. Instead, Cram's grand but irregular plan was largely determined by the land contours. Thus on wooded hilltops – the women on the south side of Westhampton Lake and the men on the north – Cram envisioned the monastic campus grouping about which he had written and dreamed so often.

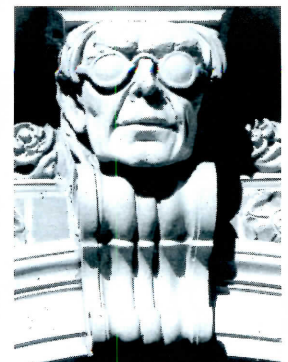
In his first plan, Cram called for strict organization with a Beaux Arts cross-axial plan. But within that framework he established a number of smaller, more irregular spaces to avoid symmetry and create a strong sense of the picturesque. If his plan had been followed to the letter, the present-day University of Richmond would have evolved into two tightly built, hilltop academic villages.

But it was not. Although the university continued to build in the Gothic style, over the decades it failed to follow the axial, cloistered scheme that Cram advocated. Today, the surviving Westhampton campus most closely approximates Cram's ideal and reflects his brilliance as a planner. Its broad flat lawn is defined

by massive buildings all but enclosing four sides. And hidden beyond North Court, Keller Hall, and the Modlin Center for the Arts are gardens and courtyards.

What Cram envisioned at West Point, where he was working within an already-existing framework, was a castle on a hill. At Princeton, he was able to link the buildings in quadrangles. At Richmond, however, where he was working with a clean palette and an enthusiastic client, he was less successful in realizing his Medieval dream. Recently, however, the university has rediscovered its Gothic roots and begun to link new buildings with existing structures to create better defined spaces.

This article was excerpted from a lecture given at "Cram, Bottomley, and Gillette: A Symposium on Architecture and Design" at the University of Richmond. An exhibit on Cram's work continues at the university's Marsh Art Gallery until Jan. 31. Call 804-289-8276 for hours.



Cram appears on campus as a keystone.

Production Resumes in Newport News Dairy Barn

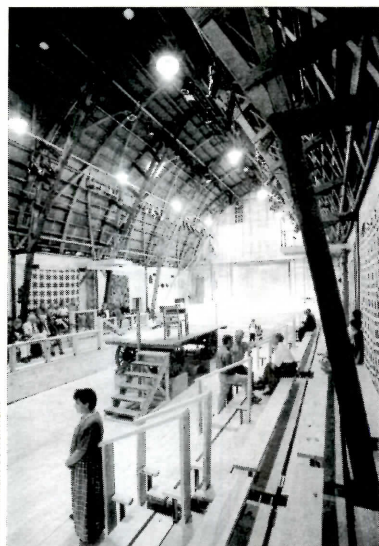
Every once in a rare while, an architect, a building owner, and a community's desire for saving a landmark building coincide with a larger goal. When this happens, says Walter Wildman, AIA, the result is a collaboration that "brings communities together."

Wildman, a principal of Rancorn Wildman Architects in Newport News, remembers hearing about the Yoder Dairy barn's being in danger from encroaching commercial development. Its location between Interstate 64 and Oyster Point Road in Newport News put it in one of the most desirable commercial areas on the Peninsula. His concern developed into a conversation with John David Yoder, patriarch of the Yoder family's interests, who also hoped to save the barn. But to what end?

Enter the Mennonite Colony, the members of which were discussing ideas for celebrating the 100th anniversary of its local formation. Their idea of a simple Mennonite pageant gave way to a full-blown stage production using thousands of hours of personal interviews as the basis for a professionally written script, lyrics, and score. Since the dairy had often been used by the public before its closing in 1969 – locals recall skating parties on the upper

floor and school tours of the milk parlor – the idea of a theater was a natural extension of its community role.

After a nearby site was rezoned in 1995, the barn, milk parlor, silo, and a house were moved about a quarter-mile and renovations began to transform the barn and milk parlor into a theater designed by Rancorn Wildman. The barn was raised to increase headroom on the ground level. Where cattle used to roam, now there are spaces for the green



The play's the thing now at Yoder Barn.

rooms, restrooms, storage, and a future cultural heritage center. Wood columns salvaged from another farm structure support the main floor. And a new gallery links the barn and parlor.

The main floor is a single room measuring 36-by-140 feet. Its site-built trusses soar 38 feet overhead, allowing plenty of room for lighting and a staggered arrangement of stages and platforms. Where possible, original materials are left exposed. A new roof was placed on top of the original corrugated tin roof, which can be seen from below. The theater seats about 325 people, who can reach the room directly from the outside by climbing a broad wooden ramp or, from the lower level, scaling a wooden stair made with simple framing lumber.

In this humble setting, the play "Pieced Together" was performed in October to sold-out audiences. Wildman called the performance a huge success and says it probably will be repeated in the future using different stories. "My sense is that it will always be a spin-off from oral histories pieced together from real people telling stories of real events in Mennonite history."

– T. Duncan Abernathy

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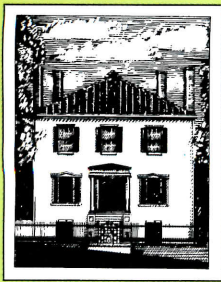
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Restoration of Pride

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Barret House:

A Construction Update

Six years following the completion of comprehensive work to restore the 1844 home of Richmond tobacco merchant William Barret, the Virginia Foundation for Architecture has undertaken a second phase of restoration that is no less vital to the property's long-term survival.

Starting last July and continuing through early 1998, the signature granite wall along the west and south sides of the house along with brick retaining walls to the east and north, are being taken down, stabilized using modern structural methods, and rebuilt in their original locations.

Repairs had been considered necessary – perhaps urgent – on the brick wall that towers over a narrow alleyway behind the Barret House. Not only was the wall leaning dangerously toward an office building on an adjacent lot, but it was separating noticeably from a side wall that separates the Barret House property from land owned and occupied by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Design solutions for the rear and side walls were well underway by summer when an unprecedented rainfall associated with a torrential July thunderstorm caused tons of granite blocks along Cary Street to collapse into the street and sidewalk. In that instant, a sequential repair of the walls was transformed into a simultaneous one.

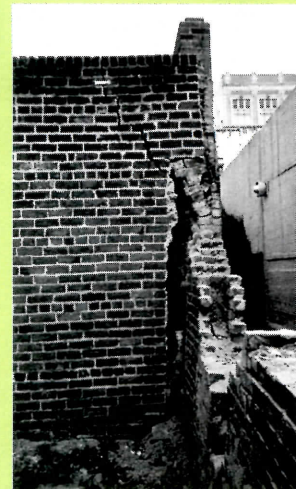
Costs for work on the rear wall are being divided equally between the Foundation and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce (which shares ownership of the brick walls that separate the two houses and abut the alley behind them). That project alone will cost nearly \$300,000.

Repairs to the brick walls by Schnabel Foundation Company of Bethesda, Maryland, focused first on stabilizing and then holding the walls permanently in place. To do this, ten steel pilings were driven into the alley to form the skeletal structure for a poured-in-place concrete wall. That wall, in turn, is anchored horizontally into the earth beneath the Chamber and Barret House parking lots. Employing a design by Joseph Dye Lahendro, AIA, visible portions of the wall were formed with concrete into a series of recessed panels against which plantings will be espaliered.

Schnabel also is repairing the damage to the massive granite wall, returning the wall to plumb, and stabilizing it. The granite-veneer blocks and rubble wall behind them are being taken down, with the exposed earth to be covered in a monolithic concrete mix held firmly in place with steel rods. Finally, the granite will be relaid and secured before earth is backfilled.

Because the process entailed removing the dry-laid granite stones, it was decided to simultaneously restore the cast-iron fence that rests on top of the granite wall. Richmond blacksmith Patrick McNamee was engaged to restore the ironwork to like-new condition. To do this, McNamee will remove the fence, sandblast the components to bare metal, and rebuild the pieces that have deteriorated or been damaged over 150-odd years. Then he will refabricate the fence, reinforcing the driveway gate and replacing the lock with a device reminiscent of the mid-19th century. Missing pieces will be recast in molds made from surviving parts.

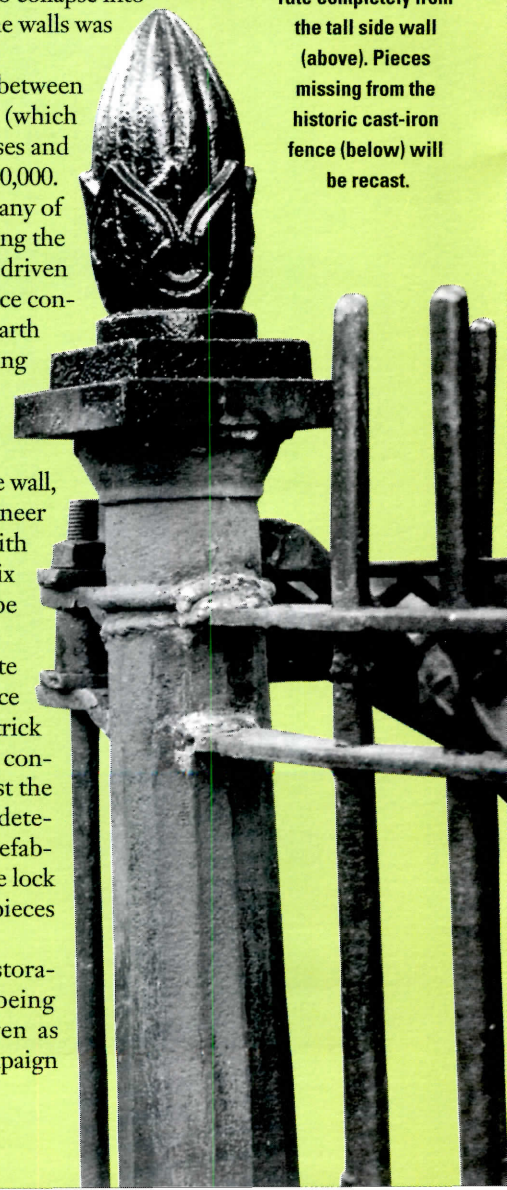
Estimated costs for the granite wall repair and fence restoration are \$200,000. Grant support for the restoration is being sought by the Virginia Foundation for Architecture, even as Foundation trustees lay plans for the second phase of the Campaign for Building a Vision.



Before repairs, the property's rear wall threatened to separate completely from the tall side wall (above). Pieces missing from the historic cast-iron fence (below) will be recast.



Water dumped by a July thunderstorm toppled tons of granite into the street.



■ **"Swags, Urns, and Eagles: Details of the Federal Period."** Victoria Cooper's photographs depict Federal-period houses and the decorative arts including Woodlawn Plantation, Tudor Place, Dumbarton House, and The Octagon. Fee. Through Jan. 4 at The Octagon, Washington, D.C. 202-638-3105.

■ **"Lying Lightly on the Land."** This exhibition traces the development of scenic parkways and roads in America's national parks from the creation of Yellowstone to the current deliberations on rebuilding flood-ravaged Yosemite. No charge. Through Jan. 10 at the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C. 202-272-2448.

■ **"Circa 1914: The Gothic Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram."** Buildings and designs of Ralph Adams Cram depict his stubborn promotion of the Gothic early in this century. No charge. Reopens Jan. 13 and continues through Jan. 31 at the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond. 804-289-8276.

■ **"Hallowed Ground: Preserving America's Heritage."** Blacktop and concrete threaten the region of Virginia that was home to some of the country's renowned leaders and now encompasses 17 historic districts. The area's beauty is portrayed in photographs sponsored by Protect Historic America. Fee. March-April 1998 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. 804-367-0844.

■ **"Ansel Adams, A Legacy."** The photographer's career is depicted in an exhibition of 115 photographs, including portraiture and close-ups of nature that Adams personally selected to expand the public's sense of his accomplishments. No charge. Through March 1998 at the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C. 202-357-2700.

■ **"Civics Lessons: Recent New York Public Architecture."** An exhibition celebrating recent achievements in New York City public architecture, including the Queens West Development Plan, U.S. Courthouse at Foley Square, and restoration of Grand Central Terminal. No charge. Through May at the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

■ **"Planning Washington's Monumental Core."** Exhibition highlights the history of federal planning in Washington, D.C., from Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 to today. Exhibit includes historic and contemporary photographs, maps, and videos. No charge. Through June at the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

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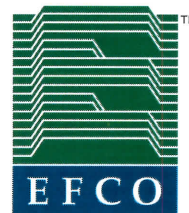




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Art DECO Style



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Art Deco Style. By Bevis Hillier and Stephen Escritt. 240 pp. Illustrated. London: Phaidon Press. \$59.95 cloth.

Review by Douglas Greenwood

One wonders whether there's really anything more to say about the likes of Jane Austen, Abstract Expressionism, William Faulkner, or Art Deco. So much has already been written about them, it seems there's nothing more to add. But, as Bevis Hillier and Stephen Escritt demonstrate in this provocative assessment, there is still much to be learned about Art Deco. A 20th century phenomenon firmly grounded in the Art Moderne movement that preceded it, Art Deco seems to have been blessed with a staying power that is nothing short of astonishing. Indeed, some of the great cities of the world – including Vienna, London, Sydney, Bombay, and Paris – count Art Deco structures, murals, interiors, and artifacts among their most prized treasures.

Popular rediscovery of Art Deco fueled the 1989 renovation of the Marlin Hotel in Miami Beach.

In retrospect, there are many reasons for the popularity and resilience of Art Deco. In the first place, it appealed to middlebrow as well as highbrow culture. Unlike other art forms that cultivated upper-class tastes (and bankrolls), Art Deco images were embraced by blue-bloods and ordinary citizens alike. While only the well-to-do could afford the one-of-a-kind silver tea service of an artisan such as Jean Puiforcat or sculpture by Eric Gill, there were many functional objects – commercially produced desk ornaments or kitchen appliances, for example – that found their way into middle-class households. In fact, many such common objects have, over the past 25 years, become the starting point for a growing number of Art Deco collectors.

Even more important from an American perspective, so many of the public buildings that were erected in the '20s and '30s under the auspices of the federal

government owe an unmistakable debt to Art Deco ideology. It was an ideology rooted in classicism that at the same time looked to the future. Even today, the surviving American buildings from this period are, with rare exception, well-crafted, substantial, and functional – adorned with murals, cornices, and ornamentation that stand as monuments to perhaps the most successful federal building project ever enacted.

Another reason for Art Deco's wide influence is its pervasiveness in so many disciplines: art, architecture, graphic design, typography, interior design, furniture, jewelry, ceramics, textiles, and industrial manufacture. What apparently appealed to many who integrated Art Deco images into their work was the combination of its bright, vibrant colors; its distinctive range of floral, figurative, and geometric motifs; and its sumptuous materials – gold, silver, jade, and marble.

The actual phrase "Art Deco," which strikes modern ears as having been around for many years, was in fact appropriated from the title of the 1925 World's Fair in Paris, the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. But the term was not in vogue until much later, in 1966, the year of a pioneering exhibition mounted by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and two years before Hillier's influential monograph, *Art Deco in the Twenties and Thirties*, broke new ground in the area.

It's hard to believe, but before Hillier's study there was almost nothing in print about Art Deco as a school of art. His work laid out the basic outlines of Art Deco's emergence and put it into perspective as a movement that sprang from ancient Egyptian typology and Cubism to Russian ballet and the Bauhaus, migrating from France and elsewhere in Europe to England, Australia, South America, and the United States. This time around, Hillier has the benefit of having mounted a monumental Art Deco exhibition himself and having witnessed the development of a cottage industry devoted to the style.

In the U.S. alone, the decade following World War I witnessed the explosive growth of cities, accompanied by unparalleled commercial growth and rampant consumerism. As has so often been

the case, New York set the pace for the rest of the nation. "There was already a modern presence in the great New York department stores by 1925," the authors note. "Lord and Taylor displayed an American-made ensemble in the autumn accompanied by a range of imported objects, while there was a modern element of Wannamaker's tercentennial pictorial pageant of New York at the inauguration of their new building." This influence soon went beyond the main floor, permeating the architecture of the building itself. Art Deco advanced from being a superficial trend into a form-language that was integral to the building's function.

Contributors to the Art Deco oeuvre included familiar figures such as Picasso and Braque, Rene Lalique, Sonia Delauney, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier. Nowhere was its influence more pervasive than in the U.S., which coincided partly with the nation's emergence as a major industrial power. In some respects, there is a chicken-and-egg aspect to the rise of Art Deco in the United States, for some of the more noteworthy aspects of its heyday involved the commercial manufacture of products with an Art Deco "look." In view of this development, the question naturally arose: Is it art or just another mass-produced object? This was a valid question, one which has to some extent always been implicit in the decorative arts, especially as the label "handmade" gave way to "Made in England" or "Produit en France." The answer, of course, is that it was both. For as fine as the best Art Deco works were, there were a lot more that were utterly devoid of good taste – and not all of them mass-produced.

In their most original analysis, the authors suggest that Art Deco flourished precisely because of the varied pressures that political thought brought to bear on the movement. "The commercial, Moderne style that served industry in France was adopted by Italian totalitarianism, while the luxury Art Deco idiom simultaneously incorporated the neoclassicism so close to Mussolini's heart and reflected the stylistic pluralism of Italian fascism," they write. "In Central Europe, the discourse between Art Deco and the folk tradition signified either a retreat from Modernity, as in Vienna, or the emergence of newly defined national identities, as in Prague and Warsaw. In the Netherlands, the Moderne style provided a populist version of the increasing orthodoxy of Modernism. This web of different associations explains how Art Deco could be condemned for being both luxurious and austere, archaic and modern, bourgeois and populist, reactionary and radical. As an essentially eclectic style, it mirrored very diverse aspects of the social, economic, political, and aesthetic discourse of inter-war Europe."

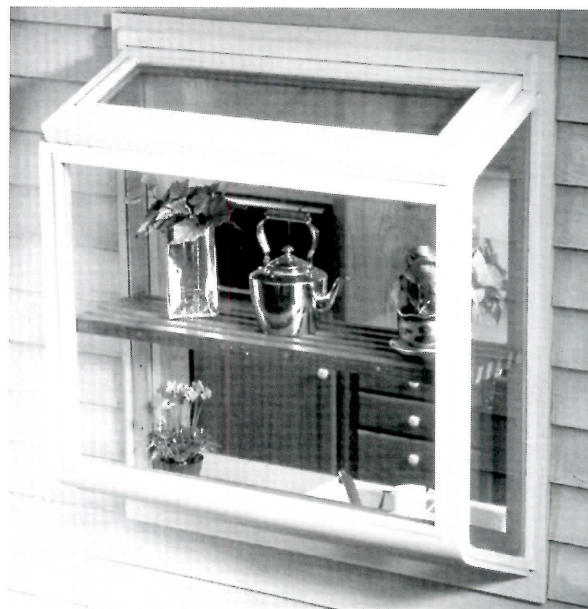
What is clear from a close reading of Art Deco Style is that there were many permutations, many digressions within various circles where artists developed their own particular versions of the idiom. This makes for a most unusual and refreshing approach to art history – an intelligently written addition to the library.

Douglas Greenwood of McLean is a frequent contributor to Inform.



This 1935 table lamp of aluminum, bakelite, and glass is typical of the machine-inspired American style of Art Deco.

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Deep *in the* Woods

Built with care and a clever touch, an addition to the Burgundy Farm Country Day School occupies a wooded site without compromising nature.

By Ed Guntz

For a private school that stresses respect for nature, the idea of building a large expansion in the woods generated more than a little uneasiness.

Trustees of the Burgundy Farm Country Day School in Alexandria were committed to building more classrooms for their elementary grade students, and the best available site on the land-locked campus was a wooded hillside west of the existing buildings. But as stewards for a school that places a high priority on teaching the natural sciences, building committee members didn't want to set a poor example by destroying nature in the process of expanding.

"Some of the committee members were very nervous," recalls Alexandria architect James Ritter, FAIA. "They had a vision of bulldozers coming in and opening up a big gash in the forest."

Ritter and associated architect Joanne Goldfarb addressed their clients' concerns with a pair of wood-and-glass pavilions that sit lightly on the land – and teach valuable lessons about architecture and education in the process.

Models of environmentally sensitive design, the pavilions demonstrate it is possible for buildings and nature to coexist. Because they were constructed deep in the woods, they expose students to their natural surroundings much more than if they had been erected closer to other campus buildings. They also show that architecture, when it grows out of the school's curriculum, can be as integral to education as books or music. "There has been an effort over the years to leave things alone, and that part of the campus was totally undisturbed," says school director Gerald Marchildon. "But we all feel it came off well. When you're in these buildings, you really experience being up in the trees."

It would be hard to get much closer to nature, observes Megan Sheehan-Dean, a former elementary teacher. "It's wonderful to have the trees right there," she says. "When we studied birds and made feeders, we were in the birds' habitat."

To fourth grader Becca Tinker, it's like going to school in a treehouse. "I like the way the trees grow right through the deck," she enthuses. Every class feels as if it's outdoors, adds Emily Thomas, another fourth grader. "I like the high ceilings and the way the light comes in."

The non-sectarian Burgundy Farm School was established in 1946 on a former dairy farm that the federal government had acquired for possible use as wartime housing. From the beginning, faculty members have taken advantage of the setting to expose students to the world around them, including woods, fields, streams, and gardens on the property and the creatures who live there.

Experiments with light, sound, air, heat, gravity, and the weather are designed to help students learn about the environment from an early age.

As the school approached its 50th anniversary, members of the building committee wanted to create a distinct campus to separate younger students in grades 2 through 5 from older ones. The school hired the Alexandria firm James William Ritter Architect, which associated with Joanne Goldfarb Architect to tackle the problem. Working with the building committee, Ritter and Goldfarb determined that the best location was a wooded hillside a short walk from the school's existing buildings – mostly barns and other farm structures that had been converted to classrooms more than 40



Photos: Prakash Patel

The architects treaded lightly on the hillside by placing the buildings on posts (facing page). In some cases, holes were cut in the outside deck and roofs were notched to allow trees to survive (above).



The new classroom buildings provide separate facilities for the school's second- through fifth-graders while maintaining the architectural spirit of the existing campus.

years earlier. They also knew the school wanted to retain its woodsy character as much as possible, while sticking to a budget of about \$725,000 for the buildings alone.

The design consists of a matching pair of 3,200-square-foot pavilions, each containing two classrooms and a central core with a kitchen, lavatories, storage, and other shared spaces. Between the two classrooms is a “quiet room” for computer education and small group activities.

By building classrooms in pairs, the architects maintained the scale of the older campus buildings and eliminated wasteful corridor space. Adjacent to each classroom is a corresponding cedar deck that doubles as an outdoor teaching space, reflecting the curriculum's emphasis on the environment. Work tables are built into the deck's railings for outdoor experiments.

To create structures that sit lightly in the woods, the designers elected to build them on wood poles. That meant contractors would not have to damage tree roots or bring in heavy machinery during construction. It was also an inexpensive way to build, and that helped meet the budget.

The pavilions were designed to relate to the existing farm structures without mimicking them. The cores are clad with board-and-batten siding to match a larger building on campus that dates from the 1960s. Classrooms are largely transparent, with glass walls that open to sweeping views outdoors. The architects selected metal roofing to recall the roofs of nearby barns. Colors, however, are used in the opposite way than they are on nearby structures – a red roof and gray walls rather than a gray roof and red walls.

“We tried to make the buildings barn-like, without literally making barn shapes,” Ritter said. “We also tried to express that each pavilion was made of two classrooms around a shared core. I wanted the core to read as a separate element, so that if the classrooms went away, you’d still have a barn-like building.”

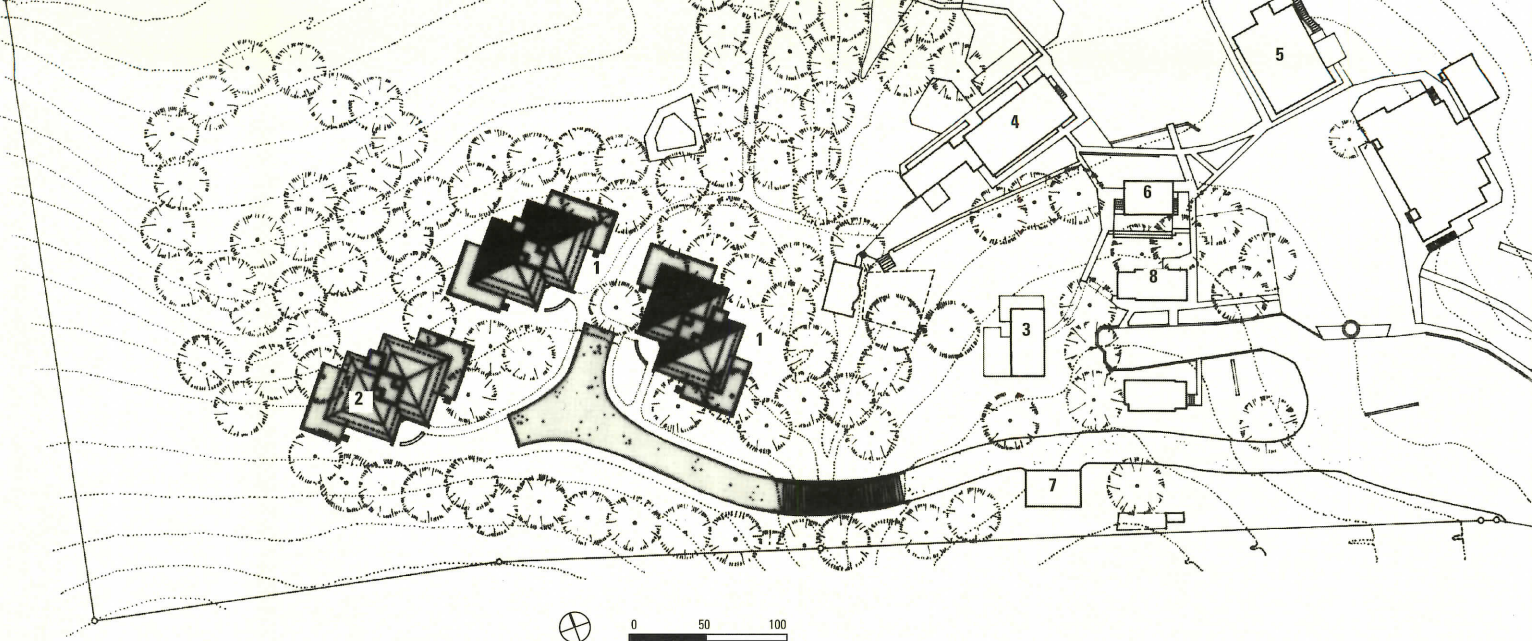
Each classroom has its own ventilation tower with a rounded top. In a practical sense, the towers house heating and air conditioning equipment for the classrooms and all of the exhaust pipes and ductwork. In a formal sense, they recall the ventilators

of existing barns, while providing playful signature elements in profile against the sky.

Inside each pavilion, the two classrooms are L-shaped in plan, enabling teachers to have more than one activity underway at a time. The teachers' desks were built on casters so they could be moved to help divide the space. Ceilings slope upwards toward the center, providing extra wall space for hanging everything from whale sculptures to dinosaurs. To stay within budget, the architects used economical, residential-scaled materials, including roof trusses that were left exposed.

The architects tried to bring in as much natural light as possible, so students could experience the cycle of the seasons and the sun's movement around the building during the day. Another goal, Ritter said, was to create buildings that explain the construction technology.

“The idea was to make a building that teaches students about the reality of the building itself, so there aren't too many mysteries,” he said. “They can see the bones – trusses, posts, and beams. They can see the skin. They can see the veins and



Site Plan

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 New Classroom Buildings | 5 East Barn |
| 2 Future Classroom Building | 6 Myer's Barn |
| 3 Administration | 7 Caretaker's Residence |
| 4 West Barn | 8 Drama Theater |

arteries of the air duct system. It's all very direct. Only the wiring is hidden."

Now that they're in the buildings, teachers have a few quibbles. They note, for instance, that because the building committee wanted a direct relationship between indoors and outdoors, there are no vestibules or airlocks to keep cold winter air from rushing in when doors open. The rolling desks don't roll very well. The L-shaped classrooms can get noisy when students break into two or more groups. Rain on the metal roof can raise a racket. And the windows are typically plastered with drawings and posters that obscure views of the woods.

But for the most part, educators and parents say, the buildings are very successful. "I love them," said school board president Susan Jonas, the mother of a fourth grader. "They have a sort of pagoda look to them, a very Eastern quality. At night, they're like lanterns."

Because Ritter and Goldfarb took a chance and designed pavilions that are so much a part of the woods, Jonas said, students interact with the environment in a way they never could in conventional classrooms. "They're out in nature more. They feel the rhythm of the seasons."

They also get the message that it's possible to be part of nature without plundering it. "I'd like to think that the site is better because the buildings are here, rather than the other way around," says Ritter. "That's what we tried to show the students: Building doesn't have to mean ruining the natural environment."

Ed Guntz is the architecture critic of The Sun in Baltimore.



Photos: Stephen W. Small

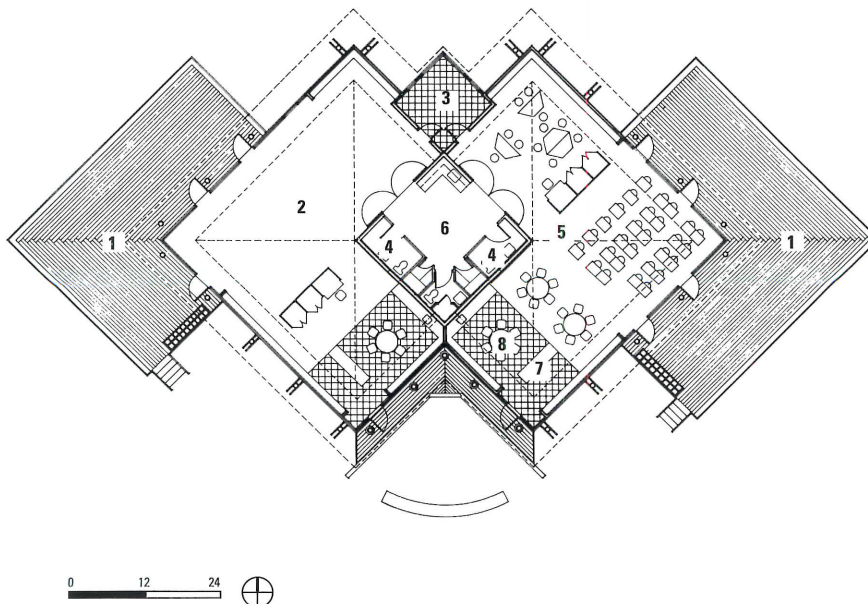
Seen through the trees, the buildings fit comfortably among the old farm buildings on campus.

- Project:** Classroom Buildings, Burgundy Farm Country Day School, Alexandria
- Architect:** James William Ritter Architect, in association with Joanne Goldfarb Architect (Project team: James William Ritter, FAIA, principal; Joanne Goldfarb, AIA, principal; Charles Matta, AIA, project manager; Helen Logan, Associate AIA)
- Contractor:** American Property Construction Co.
- Consultants:** Potomac Energy Group (mechanical); Ehlert/Bryan, Inc. (structural); R.C. Fields, Jr. & Associates (civil)
- Owner:** Burgundy Farm Country Day School

Photos: Stephen W. Small



The combination of exposed trusses and natural illumination offers an ever-changing pattern of light and shadow inside (left). Exterior walls are primarily glass to give students a visual link to the natural setting (inset).



Floor Plan

- 1 Deck
- 2 Classroom A
- 3 Storage
- 4 Lavatories
- 5 Classroom B
- 6 Quiet Room
- 7 Cubicles
- 8 Project Area

The task of designing new classrooms for the Burgundy Farm Country Day School didn't end when the construction documents went out to bid. Because the two pavilions were designed to fit in with their natural setting, the architects monitored construction closely and made a variety of design decisions in the field as work progressed.

One of the key issues involved protecting the trees on the heavily-wooded site. Architect James Ritter says the design and construction team went to great lengths to position the buildings so few trees would be lost.

Even at the earliest stages of design, the process was fluid. Ritter arrived at the

On the Boards and In the Field

buildings' final form by constructing a series of seven cardboard study models that helped him determine the height and shape of the ventilation shafts on the roof, the location of mechanical equipment, the potential for incorporating passive solar collectors, and other issues related to the buildings' form. "There were two purposes for the models: to see what we were designing and to explain it to the building committee," Ritter said.

Once the building forms were set, the decks were designed to have small openings so trees could grow through. Where trees came very close to the classrooms themselves, roof overhangs were notched to provide adequate clearance for branches. And because a land survey was a few feet off the mark, some details had to be modified as the roofs were taking shape.

Related was the issue of keeping construction equipment away from the trees so nothing would accidentally back into them. Working around the trees added to the construction cost, but only one tree had to be cut down to make way for the buildings. Several others have been taken down by the school since the buildings were completed.

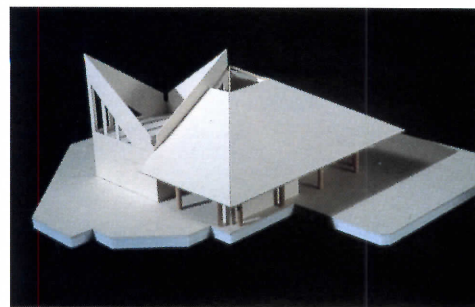
Protecting the children was another recurring aspect of the architects' construction oversight. Ritter said he originally had hoped to create a sort of moat to mark the points where the decks meet each building entrance. But school representatives overruled any sunken areas where children could trip and fall. The moats were eliminated, along with plans for downspouts made of heavy chain links. Although Ritter has used the same element with success in his residential work, building committee members feared children would try to climb them.

The choice of classroom lighting was made after construction was far along. Ritter said the design team considered a variety of light sources—including metal halide, incandescent, and fluorescent—and wanted to test them in place before making a final selection. Although they initially preferred metal halide lights, the designers viewed samples in a framed-out classroom and decided they caused too much glare. They ultimately settled on fluorescent lights, which are placed on racks that were custom-designed to be compatible with the ceiling trusses.

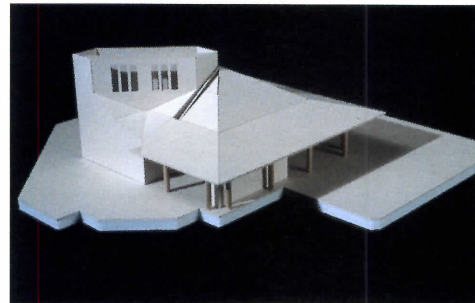
One last-minute change Ritter couldn't make involved the placement of electric meters and panel boxes beneath the decks on the building exteriors. His plans called for placing the meters and boxes out of sight in the core. But on both buildings, he says, they were installed in more visible locations away from the mechanical core. By the time he discovered it, the mistake was too costly to fix. Although the locations don't adversely affect the way the buildings work, he said, it still troubles him. "I hate to see things happen on buildings accidentally, when they could occur another way."

The architects had more control of the selection of materials with which students and teachers come in contact every day. One example: because school officials were concerned about toxicity of materials, they avoided using lumber that was pretreated with chemical preservatives. That led to the choice of cedar decking, which was more costly than other woods but adds to the buildings' beauty and durability.

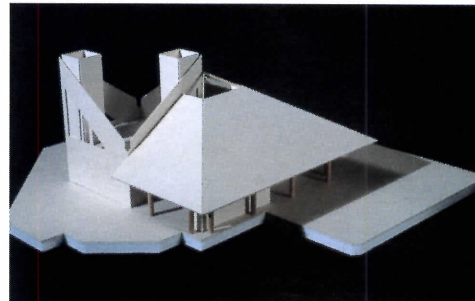
— Ed Gunts



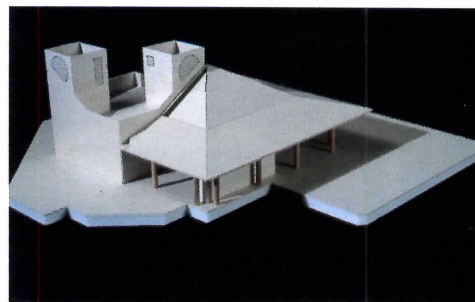
Study models were used to refine design decisions. Ritter looked at tapered walls to reduce the scale of the "core," which was considered bulky at first.



Another option to reduce the visual prominence of the core was to place a single diagonal element on the rooftop.



This refinement investigated the use of two towers above the core to reflect the dual nature of the building and the need for two mechanical units.



Ritter also explored the option of passive cooling with large, open towers. Note the articulation of the roof to create a more comfortable scale inside.

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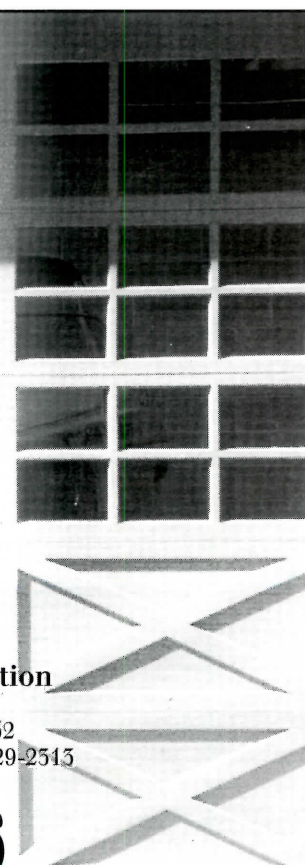
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inform AWARDS 97

Our trio of jurors from Georgia and Alabama found plenty to get excited about among the field of submissions to the sixth annual Inform Awards program. Eighteen projects were selected for recognition from a total of 93 entries – a testament to the high quality of design work in the region. With the possibility of awards in the categories of interiors, landscape architecture, and objects, the best news rose from the objects category, which produced no awards in 1996 but scored a comeback this year with six winners.

The Jury

Merrill Elam, FAIA, of Scogin, Elam & Bray in Atlanta. Elam has taught at Rice University, the University of Virginia, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her firm has won numerous national ALA Honor Awards for design.

J. Thomas Regan, Dean of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction at Auburn University. Regan, a frequent lecturer and design juror, is a former Virginia Tech faculty member and a past president of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

Tom Ventulett, FAIA, of Thompson Ventulett Stainback & Associates in Atlanta. In addition to being a frequent college lecturer, Ventulett is director of design at a firm that has reaped dozens of state and national design awards.



Kathleen A. Saccopoulos

SEAT YOURSELF

"Sextet," a system of plywood furniture, is based on the idea of aesthetic unity through economy. In this exercise to convert plywood sheets into chairs and other furniture, sawdust is the only waste product. Each piece consumes one-sixth of a 4-by-8-foot sheet of birch veneer plywood. The furniture is designed to be mass produced and flat-packaged as two-dimensional puzzles, including ready-to-assemble hardware. "This is very clever—it is obviously thought through many times to produce each individual design," noted the jury. "There is a fairly complex series of moves involved in cutting out that piece of plywood. And we like the fact that the designer required himself to use every piece of wood."

Architect: Christos A. Saccopoulos, AIA, Raleigh, N.C.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Three computer kiosks to promote Lucent Technologies' telecommunications products were designed with a combination of customized and stock parts. The units start as a series of vertically layered planes that transform into an upright curvilinear facade, which conceals a monitor, CPU, and speaker components. "In a way it looks confrontational—like something that is introducing you to a new electronic age," said the jury. "But it has a lot of presence. Just try to imagine it in use at a show, like at a large boat show. It's very interesting."

Architect: Greenwell Goetz Architects, Washington, D.C.

Owner: Lucent Technologies

Fabricator: Enterprise Woodworking & Design



Rhoda Baer

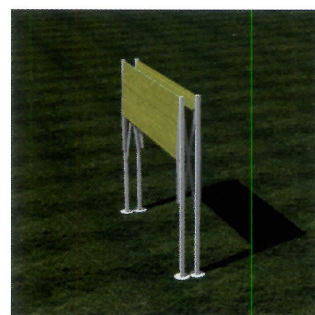
FOR KIDS' SAKE

The physical qualities of the exhibit design for the H.E.B. Science Treehouse—a small children's museum in San Antonio, Texas—was strongly influenced by the high-energy character of the building architecture. Large-scale exhibits feature machines that demonstrate, through the use of gears, pulleys, and pneumatic devices, the fundamental principles of mechanics. Each piece, such as the tennis ball launcher shown here, is designed in keeping with an emphasis on experimentation and play. "The design is an interesting integration of furniture, toy, and machine," the jury said. "It is thought about at all those different levels. And when you see them, you are invited to participate."

Designers: Hands On! Inc., St. Petersburg, Fla.
and Edwin Pease, AIA, Williamsburg

Owner: The Witte Museum

Fabricator: C.W. Shaw, Inc.



TO MARKET, TO MARKET



Paul Bardagly

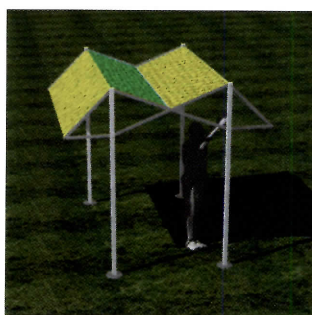
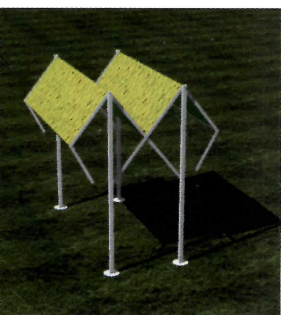
YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

Lightweight and easy to carry, The Museum Stool is a seat for people who view works of art on guided museum tours. Used individually or in multiples, the stool doubles as a sturdy seat and work surface. It stacks for easy storage and employs a design based on timeless construction principles. "It appears well-made, simple, sturdy, and good looking," noted the jury. "It's well thought-out. It stacks reasonably. And it has a slot so you can pick it up with no problem. Plus the angle of the legs is right, which is not easy to achieve. If it's too wide, then it looks like the legs are going to spread if you sit on it."

Architect: Thomas S. Shiner, AIA, Washington, D.C.



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As an alternative to tent rental, a seasonal farmer's market in Charlotte, N.C., commissioned the design and manufacture of a portable shelter that is easily put up and taken down. The awnings were conceived, designed, tested, and produced in less than 90 days. At a cost of \$300 each, the patented tents unfold using fabric that is stretched and attached with Velcro on aluminum frames. "This is an American version of a European solution—we have all seen old marketplaces like this," noted the jury. "But this design is governed by the width of a parking space. This is a great solution. And it's people-proportioned. We wouldn't have believed its potential if we hadn't seen the photographs."

Architect: Wagner Murray Architects, Charlotte, N.C.

Owner: Charlotte Uptown Development Center

Fabricator: Erdle Perforating



Thomas Kojcsich

WAREHOUSE FOR TWO

An unsightly metal building provided the blank canvas which a Richmond couple artfully transformed into their home. Their use of industrial materials such as exposed concrete floors, colored concrete blocks, steel framing, and resin-and-limestone counter tops nods to the origins of the existing structure and complements their collection of Modern furniture. Large interior spaces open to skyline vistas through the glassed-in openings that once held overhead doors. "There are some thoughtful contrasts that become delicate against the crudeness of the original building," the jury observed. "The designer made some simple moves—such as letting the block work touch what we often think of as an ugly steel frame—that produce a nice geometry."

Architect: Jeffrey Levine, AIA, Richmond

Owners: Jeffrey Levine & Margaret Moore

Contractor: Virginia Restoration & Construction Inc.

WATER WORKS

The landscape design for the Terkowitz Residence in McLean solves the problem of frequent flooding from a stream that cuts through the steep site. Normally, the flow is tapped at a log dam, carried over the headwall into a log flume, and threaded along a series of step pools and stone runnels. With heavy storms, water overflows the headwall, passes through a vegetated channel, and spreads to a sheet flow across the paving and lawn. "This project shows that a stream is a designable natural element that can be treated in several ways and still not diminished," said the jury. "The design makes the natural element of water involved in the place where people live. It's delightful."

Landscape Architect: Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Arlington

Owner: Ralph and Bobbi Terkowitz

Contractor: Ted Deppe

Landscape Contractor: Evergro



Michael Vergason



NATIONAL
MINORITY
AIDS
COUNCIL

IN TRYING TIMES

By converting two derelict townhouses into a single four-level building, the architects created new offices for the National Minority AIDS Council in Washington, D.C. Group interaction is encouraged through the design of the offices and meeting spaces. With a budget of \$700,000 for interior and exterior renovation, all counters, desks, shelves, filing cabinets, and chairs were designed to maximize space- and cost-efficiency. "We were attracted to this project by the manipulation of space through the casework and interior walls," observed the jury. "That creates a sense of community within the building. And the plan is very smart. There are places that give you a sense of privacy without isolation."

Architect: CORE, Washington, D.C.

Owner: National Minority AIDS Council

Contractor: Malin Construction, Inc.

EASTERN EXPOSURE



This office interior for MYCOM in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, includes a predictable array of rooms such as executive offices and conference rooms, but other demands peculiar to Chinese/Malaysian culture posed a challenge to Western architects. These ranged from learning the esoteric principles of Feng Shui, the Chinese discipline of space planning, to designing spaces for the chief executive who enjoys the rank of *dato*—a status comparable to knighthood. In the finished design, spaces unfold in a series of symbolic zones. "Although this is contemporary space in a hermetically sealed building, the designers evoked a kind of Elysian feeling with the use of color and light," the jury said. "There's a delicacy to the whole project."

Architect: Williams & Dynerman Architects,
Washington, D.C.

Owner: MYCOM Berhad

Contractor: Jalex Construction Co.

ATHLETES IN ACTION

The construction of five new buildings at the U.S. Olympic team training complex in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was coordinated to include an interior architectural theme that ties the separate facilities together. One-of-a-kind spaces such as the main exhibition area and dining hall are shaped like cylinders or other distinctive forms; training and competition take place in rectilinear spaces. Strong primary colors of the Olympic palette enliven the interiors throughout. "The conference and prefunction spaces are all lively," observed the jury. "Especially in the use of color, pattern, and sequencing of space, the architects have kept a feeling that is upbeat and full of energy."

Architect: Lehman Smith Wiseman & Associates, Washington, D.C.

Owner: United States Olympic Committee

Contractor: G.E. Johnson Construction Co.



Jon Miller/Hedrich Blessing



CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Restrained colors and materials evoke a simple dignity in this hearing room for the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C. The understated ante-room offers a proper formal entry into the auditorium. Inside the hearing room, the architects make the most of the openings between massive concrete beams as a place to house mechanical, lighting, and audio/visual components. "The architects set out to make a room of dignity, and they did that," the jury said. "They did some thoughtful, but inexpensive, things in the public space such as creating carpet patterns that repeat in the ceiling and designing frosted glass kiosks. It doesn't feel overtly judicial, because they avoided strokes of grandness."

Architect: Greenwell Goetz Architects, Washington, D.C.

Owner: Securities and Exchange Commission

Contractor: Bovis Construction Corp.

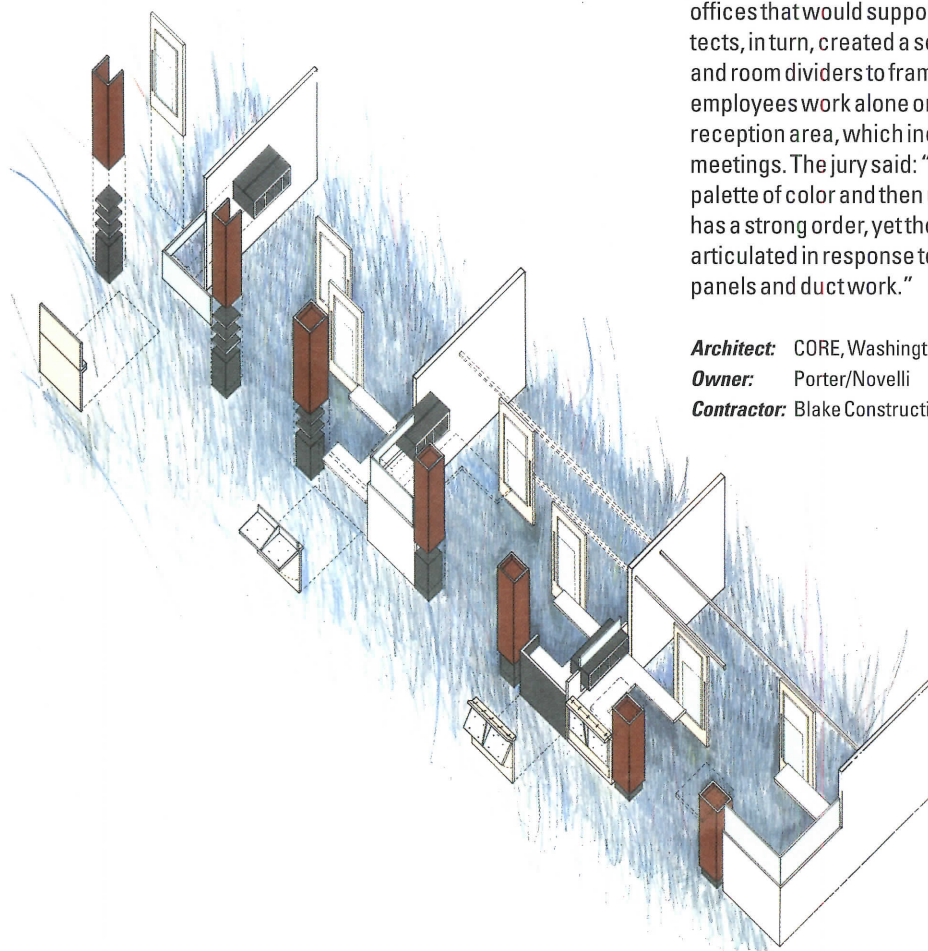
FROM PARTS MADE WHOLE

Porter/Novelli, a Washington, D.C., public relations firm, asked for offices that would support their interactive processes. The architects, in turn, created a setting that combines desks, storage units, and room dividers to frame vistas and define informal spaces where employees work alone or in teams. The heart of the office is the reception area, which incorporates an espresso bar and lounge for meetings. The jury said: "It's nicely organized – the way they limit the palette of color and then use color to organize the space. The design has a strong order, yet there are many pieces. And the ceiling is nicely articulated in response to pragmatic requirements such as access panels and ductwork."

Architect: CORE, Washington, D.C.

Owner: Porter/Novelli

Contractor: Blake Construction Company, Inc.



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Michael Vergason

ELYSIAN FIELDS

Visitors enter the Huntsville Golf Club in Shavertown, Pennsylvania, by driving through a veil of aspen, which reveals the first view of the clubhouse framed by a drift of birch. As part of the site design, the clubhouse is located to straddle the line of an old stone wall, which is reconstructed and – in combination with a new hedgerow – separates arrival/drop-off from parking. "This project deals with a terrain that is really informal, yet it is layered with a degree of formality," noted the jury. "The design also shows the power of a wall in the landscape that is an organizing element rather than just a boundary."

Landscape Architect: Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Arlington

Building Architect: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, Philadelphia

Owner: Huntsville Golf Course



N DEL

At Raku: An Asian Diner, in Washington, D.C., the architects concocted a blend of Asian influences while honoring the owners' desire for an original, contemporary design. Traditional forms and symbols are reinterpreted into a language that is tactile, sensual, and—in its use of overscaled parasols—overtly whimsical. The plan revolves around a massive blackened hearth set in contrast with a glowing shoji screen. "This holds together very nicely," said the jury. "The umbrellas, the lattice, and the translucency of the panels all feel very sympathetic to each other. The geometry and the use of materials is a bit different from what you see every day. And the TV screen successfully solves the problem of putting a TV in a bar, because they are usually terrible."

Architect: Adamstein & Demetriou Architects, Washington, D.C.

Owners: Mark Miller and Diana Goldberg

Contractor: Malin Construction

27



National Gallery of Art

THE MYSTERY OF PREHISTORY

How do you display a 10-ton artifact? That question was answered from a technical and aesthetic viewpoint in the design for "Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico" at the National Gallery of Art. Among the objects imported for the exhibit were two colossal stone heads, one of which required spatial and structural adaptations to the museum's East Building. Galleries were designed to juxtapose monumental stone sculpture with delicately carved jade and fine terra cotta. And walls were painted in deep colors to enhance the magic of the prehistoric

sculpture. "The rooms are basically dark—only the objects are illuminated—so there is really no perception of space. The objects really float in the room," said the jury. "And note that the objects range in scale from very large to very small. You can appreciate their difference, but they don't seem out of scale."

Designers: Department of Design & Installation, National Gallery of Art

Owner: National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



PLANES AND GRAINS

At the Reporters Building in Washington, D.C., the new lobby design draws its richness from a concern with pattern, motion, and direction. The centerpiece is a wall of five identical 8-by-8-foot panels which are rotated at 90-degrees to generate a dynamic pattern. Each panel consists of three pyramidal forms clad in four wood veneers. A pattern of floor accents points toward the elevators, echoed by a grid of lights in the ceiling. "We admired how carefully every detail is considered," noted the jury. "And while the design speaks to a specific period, the architects aren't mimicking an earlier style. Every surface has been thought of in a restrained, but sophisticated, way."

Architect: Weinstein Associates Architects, Washington, D.C.

Owner: Dutch Property Investments

Contractor: American Property Construction

NATURAL FORCES

A balanced house of neoclassical proportions, the Forbes Residence is sited to take advantage of lake views in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The approach by car leads to an opening in a grove of trees, where the entrance pavilion is revealed at the end of an allée of 128 Bradford pear trees. The subsequent progression of experience—approaching the house, entering the pavilion, and proceeding on axis into the great room—builds to a crescendo with the arresting lake view. The jury noted: "This project deals with a spatial sequence that is made by the landscape and the formality of the house. It is rather undeniable. You feel an extension of the architecture when you penetrate layers of trees like this."

Landscape Designer: Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, Washington, D.C.

Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Forbes



Balthazar Korab (both)





TREASURE TROVE

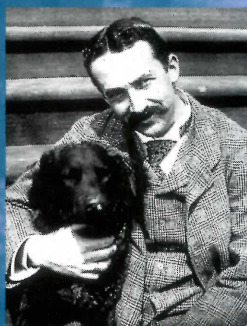
To show off examples of the country's rarest documents—including Jefferson's rough draft of the Declaration of Independence—the Library of Congress commissioned a self-contained display case. The demand for internal mechanical, security, and electrical components exerted a strong influence on the massing of the case. And while it needed to fit stylistically in the library's elaborate southwest gallery, the piece is even more successful because of its technological advances. Noted one juror: "I really like this, because it shows

that contemporary designers can work successfully within the context of that room with all those rosettes and still produce the piece they are asked to design. It does the job well."

Designer: George Sexton Associates, Washington, D.C.

Owner: Library of Congress

Fabricator: EXPLUS Incorporated



Mercer with Rollo, his constant companion.

Henry Mercer's Fantastic Castle

By *Vernon Mays*



Barry Harkin

Tile panels spanning the mantel in the library at Fonthill tell the story of civilization.

To visit Henry Mercer's weird and wonderful mansion in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, is to behold a quirky sort of genius. Not the genius of Einstein, who rewrote the laws of physics. Nor the genius of Shakespeare, who commanded the English language with unequaled mastery. Rather, Mercer's gift was visual: He could conjure up an imaginary world and make it spring to life.

Fonthill, Mercer's home of twenty years, was the pulpit from which the noted tilemaker, archaeologist, antiquarian, artist, and writer professed his affection for things handmade. Begun in 1908 when Mercer was 52, the concrete mansion was a place to entertain guests and exhibit the artifacts and prints he had collected during a lifetime of world travel. More important, however, the 42-room castle was an advertisement for the decorative tiles that Mercer's company produced for widespread sale and distrib-

ution. Oddly scaled, intuitively designed, and wildly idiosyncratic, the mansion is plastered across ceiling, floor, and walls with the products of his nearby workshop. Through his own peculiar blend of conviction and opportunism, Mercer rode the crest of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America.

Henry Mercer was born to educated parents in Doylestown, the county seat of Bucks County. After graduating from Harvard in 1879, it seemed he might follow the family tradition of a career in law. But, encouraged by a wealthy aunt, he traveled extensively through Europe and the Middle East and developed an interest in archaeology. In 1892, he went to Madrid as an honorary member of the United States Archaeological Commission and, in 1895-96, he led an expedition to explore the caves of the Yucatan Peninsula.

But his life took a sudden turn in



Alan Karchmer

Fonthill's showplace is the saloon, which incorporates artifacts from Mercer's travels.

1897. Back home in Pennsylvania, Mercer was searching for a set of fireplace tongs in a junk dealer's barn when an idea hit home. While picking through piles of objects rendered obsolete by machines – plows, flax breaks, butter churns, and more – Mercer realized that the artifacts documented a formative stage of American culture. He began rummaging through the barns, haylofts, and cellars of eastern Pennsylvania gathering what he called “the tools of the nationmaker.”

On one of these early tool-gathering forays, Mercer made a discovery that spawned his love affair with tile. While scavenging in a defunct pottery, he became intrigued by the art of Pennsylvania-German redware potters. Mercer's sympathy with the growing Arts and Crafts movement fueled his belief that “art needs the touch of a human hand,” and the craftsmanlike approach of these artisans struck a responsive chord in him.

Resolving to revive “one of the moribund clay shops,” Mercer built his own kiln. From the start, his tiles were architectural in concept, designed for use in walls, ceilings, and floors. And his timing was perfect. Decorative tiles were components of many of the popular building styles. Mercer's company, the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, quickly became one of the best known producers.

In 1901, he received his first big commission for a tiled floor at Fenway Court, now the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. For the next 25 years, Mercer tiles were installed in hundreds of important buildings, culminating in the Pennsylvania State Capitol, where 400 tile mosaics depict the history of the state.

Mercer turned his attention to building a home for himself in 1907. He started by planning the inside, giving little thought to the exterior until all 30 rooms and 12 baths had been imagined. Blocks of clay representing the rooms were arranged and rearranged until he was satisfied with the silhouette. Mercer refrained from using architectural scale drawings, instead referring during construction to a plaster-of-Paris model and rough sketches.

He also departed from convention by building his house of reinforced concrete, which was common by then in more utilitarian structures. Mercer chose concrete because of its plasticity and fire resistance. The work was hard – all the cement was mixed by hand, hoisted by a team of eight men and a horse named Lucy.

Today, a visit to the house begins in the dark foyer, where the whirlwind of colorful tiles begins to suggest the whimsy that awaits inside. Tour groups are led through a narrow corridor that snakes like a secret passageway down to the library. There, in front of the massive hearth, one meets the eclectic Henry Mercer head on. Displayed proudly across



Barry Halkin

Mercer's concrete mansion, completed in 1912, has the appearance of stone.

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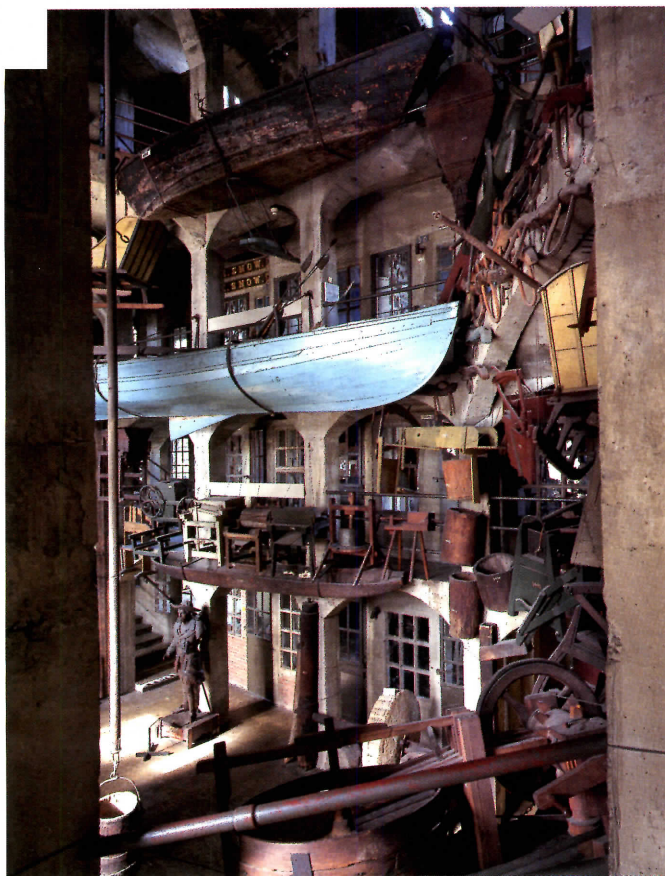
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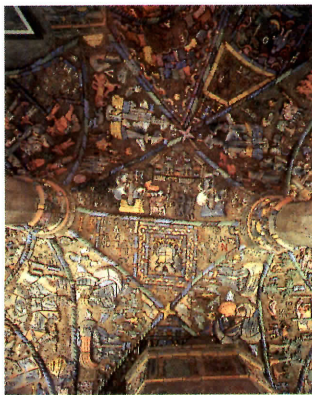
Photos: Alan Karchmer

The Mercer Museum's central court, surrounded by four tiers of thematic galleries, houses artifacts ranging from a whale boat to a fire engine.

the mantelpiece is the phrase that stood as Mercer's personal motto. As the guide explains, this Latin phrase appeared on the maps of early sea explorers at the far limit of their search. A line drawn at that point was labeled "Plus Ultra," which translates simply as "more beyond." Mercer, the renaissance man, adopted this as his call to action, acknowledging that no matter how much a person learns, the exploration never ends.

The tour continues into the saloon, where Mercer integrated pieces of his collection into the architecture – from Babylonian clay tablets placed in tiny niches to windows outlined with antique Dutch tiles. From there, the visit continues up stairs and down, along a maze of hallways. One begins to fathom the complexity of this floor plan – or be confounded by it. At the same time, a visitor appreciates the remarkable feat involved in creating this odd structure.

The vaulted tile ceilings, in particular, were a Mercer original. He began by building the columns and walls of a room, then erected a platform to the height of the column capitals. On that he heaped mounds of dirt that he coated in sand, and then pressed tiles into the sand face down. Finally, concrete was poured over the top. When it dried, the platform supports were pulled away and the dirt collapsed, leaving the tiles exposed in the ceilings.



In the mansion's Columbus Room, the ceiling celebrates discovery.

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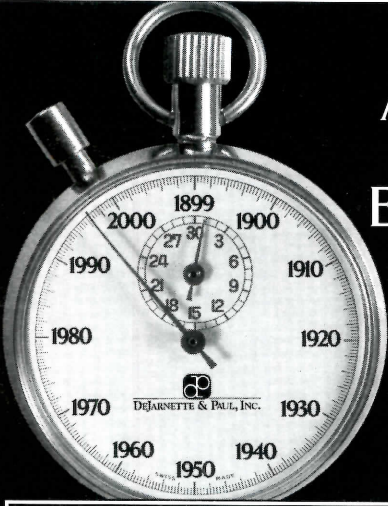
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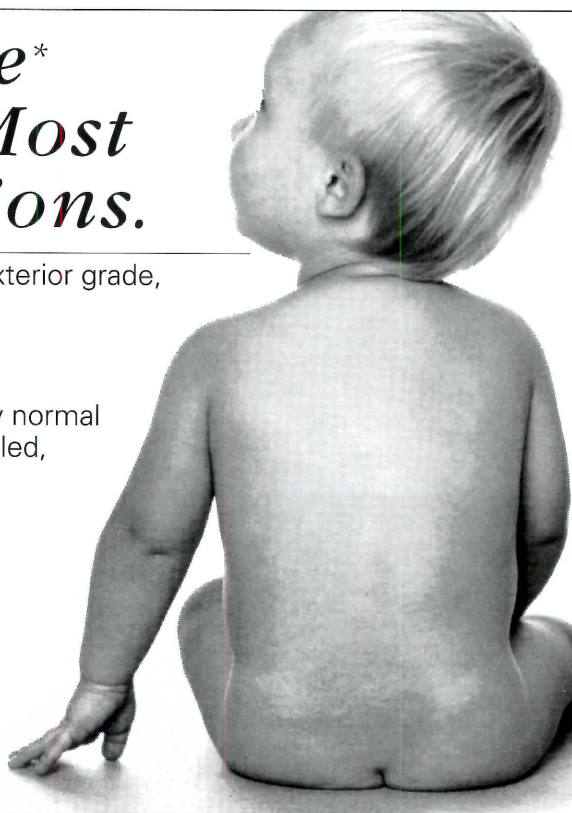
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The mansion was not even finished when, in 1910, Mercer turned his attention to building a new tile works a short walk away. He based the design on the picturesque Spanish mission churches of California and appropriated elements such as towers, cornices, chimneys, and court-yards directly from them.

In 1913, Mercer embarked on construction of a building to house his burgeoning collection of 15,000 preindustrial artifacts, some of which were as unwieldy as a whaling boat and a Conestoga wagon. Also fashioned in concrete, the building is composed of tiered galleries that ring a central court. Individual alcoves devoted to a single trade or craft broadly interpret the museum's "tools." Clothing tools, for example, run the gamut from looms and spinning wheels to cobblers' and hatmakers' implements. Tools of government range from wooden ballot boxes to the last gallows used in Bucks County.

Today, all three of Mercer's buildings are listed as National Historic Landmarks. Fonthill is a nonprofit museum run by the Bucks County Historical Society. The Moravian Pottery and Tile Works serves as a museum and producer of tiles, with a staff composed of artists who come to replicate Mercer's techniques. And the awe-inspiring Mercer Museum (which now owns 50,000 objects) recently renovated its Spruance Library, which focuses on Bucks County history, the history of trades and crafts prior to 1850, and the life of Henry Mercer.

In the fall of 1897, Mercer organized the first exhibition of his collection – grain cradles, iron plows, and crude lamps. To the amusement of many who saw the items as junk, he predicted that his collection would be "worth its weight in gold a hundred years hence." That century has passed and – in light of the current standing of material culture studies – his claim no longer seems audacious.

Henry Mercer has arrived.

Getting There

All three sites interpreting Henry Mercer's life and interests are located in Doylestown, Pa., about 30 miles north of Philadelphia. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily; 12-5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission fees for each range from \$3 to \$5 for adults. Fonthill and The Moravian Pottery & Tile Works are located on the outskirts of town at East Court Street and Rt. 313. Reservations are required for tours of the mansion (call 215-348-9461). For more information on The Mercer Museum, located at 84 South Pine St. in town, call 215-345-0210.

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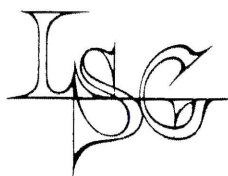
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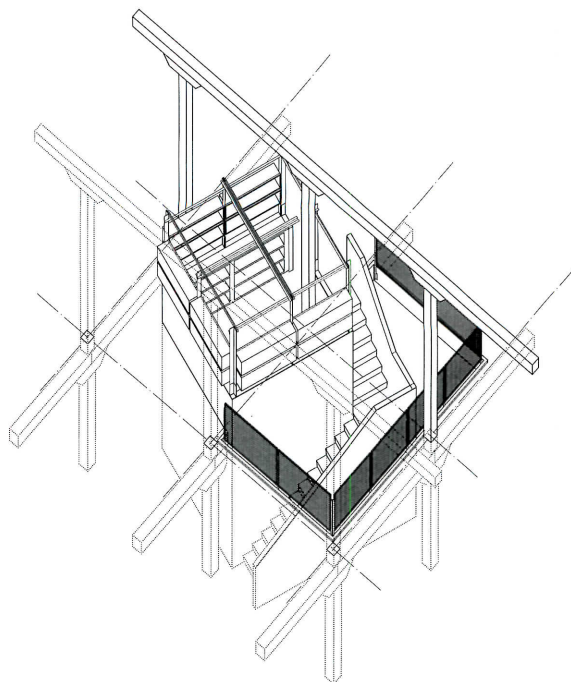
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Architect: Hayes Seay Mattern & Mattern, Roanoke
Project: Composite Medical Facility Alteration / Dental Clinic Addition

The project is part of the Air Force's vision to renovate existing hospital facilities into more efficient medical "clinics of the future." Integrating advanced technologies such as teleradiology and telemedicine within a modular floor plan creates more flexible use of space as future needs change. 540-857-3100.



Architect: Rose Architects, Richmond
Project: New Firm Offices

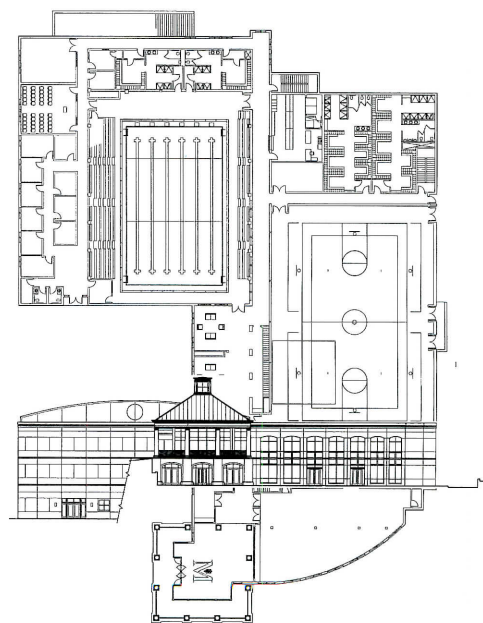
Rose Architects is currently renovating an 1870s warehouse in anticipation of relocating the firm to Richmond's historic Shockoe Bottom district. Aside from required interventions, all elements of the original structure will remain exposed and unmodified. Completion is set for December 1997. 804-747-1305.

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Architect: Gresham Smith and Partners, Richmond
Project: Southern Maryland Regional Airport

This new 8,200-square-foot terminal in St. Mary's, Maryland, will be the initial facility for air carrier service. The design combines a one-story building with a 1 1/2-story lobby featuring a curved ceiling and clerestory glazing. The building will be brick and stucco with storefront glazing. 804-355-0969.



Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, P.C., Richmond
Project: Marymount University Center

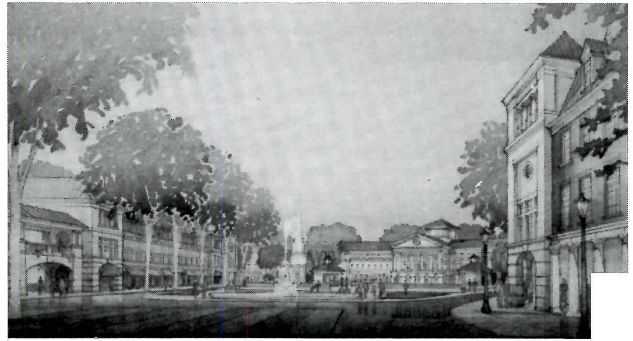
This Arlington project involves the renovation of Marymount's 39,100-square-foot Butler Hall student center and athletic facility and the addition of 40,000 more square feet. New space includes a competition gymnasium, fitness center, bookstore, restaurant, and student and commuter lounges. 804-780-9067.



Architect: Fauber Architects, P.C., Forest

Project: Carilion Adult Day Center

This 4,773-square-foot brick building is designed to serve Bedford-area adult residents with a place for daytime activities. Adjacent to Carilion Bedford Memorial Hospital, it offers space for up to 25 people to join in games, ceramics, exercise, etc., as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapy. 804-385-0495.

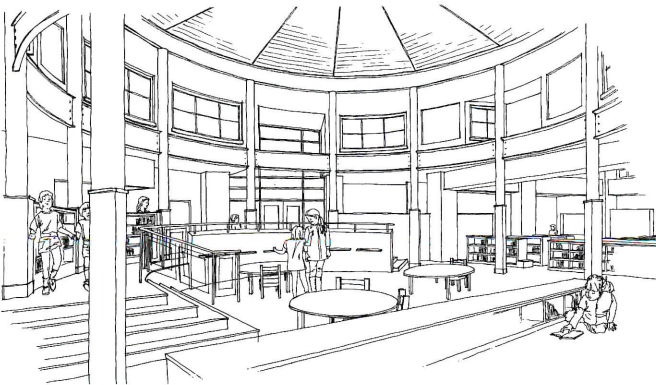


Architect: Mitchell/Matthews Architects Engineers, Charlottesville

Project: Village Center, U.Va. Research Park at North Fork

Mitchell/Matthews, with Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., won a national competition with this plan for a research "village" that reworks the components of a conventional office/research park into a traditional village form. It includes a plaza, boulevards, cafes, hotels, and conference facilities. 804-979-5220.

37



Architect: Bond Comet Westmoreland + Hiner Architects, Richmond

Project: Collegiate Lower School Library/Technology Center

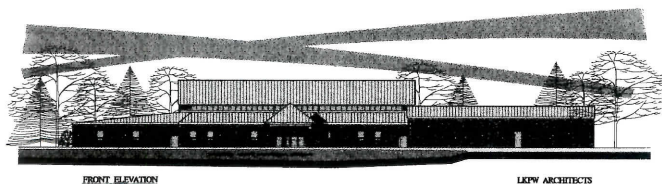
Technology drives the interior design of this 17,815-square-foot library/technology center in Richmond. A reading research center comprises the hub, and a subfloor wire management system allows students to connect laptop computers to data ports in the case-work, carpeted risers, walls, and custom furniture. 804-788-4774.



Architect: The TAF Group, Virginia Beach

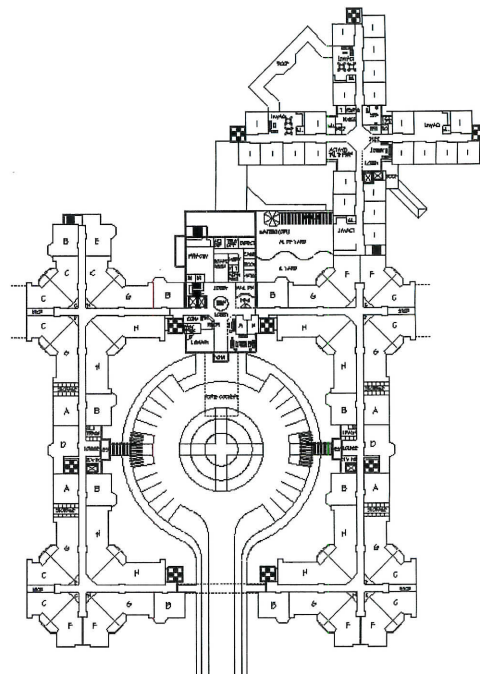
Project: Navy Exchange

This new 57,000-square-foot building in Patuxent River, Maryland, is designed as a new standard for Navy Exchange facilities worldwide. The building will replace existing facilities now housed in five separate buildings. The Navy will solicit a design/build contract based on this standard. 757-422-9933.



Architect: LKPW Architects, Richmond
Project: Richlands Armory

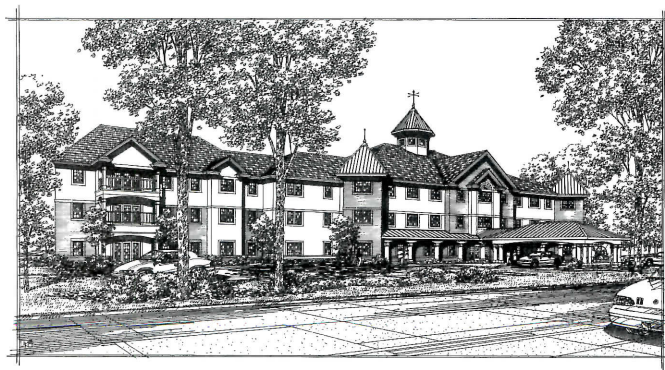
This 24,000-square-foot building, designed for the Department of Military Affairs, is located adjacent to the Southwest Virginia Community College campus. It incorporates a large assembly hall, classrooms, business wing, showers/locker room and kitchen. 804-355-8773.



Architect: SFCS, Inc., Roanoke
Project: The Trellises at Montpelier

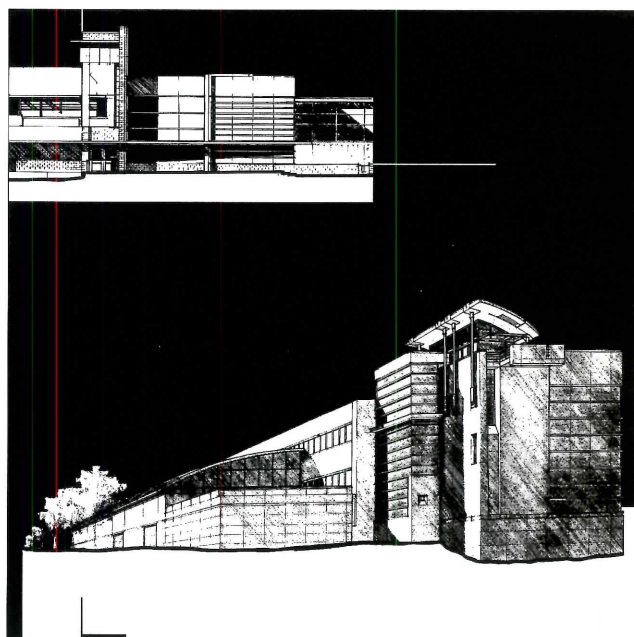
Located on 12 acres, this \$24 million retirement community in Howard County, Maryland, will serve the Baptist Home of Maryland/Delaware. Included are a community center, 175 independent living apartments, 23 assisted living units, 17 units for memory-impaired residents, and 34 nursing beds. 540-344-6664.

38



Architect: The Troyer Group, Inc., Harrisonburg
Project: Community Center and Congregate Living Apartments

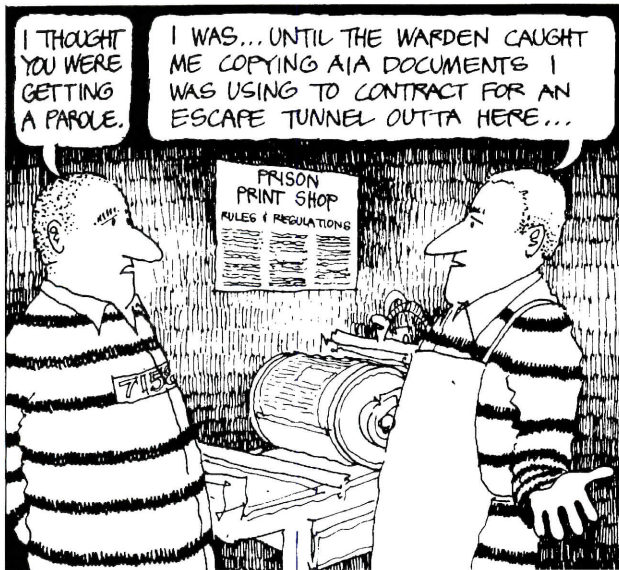
The Houff Community Center and 28-unit Maple Terrace apartments are the first phase of the Bridgewater Retirement Community campus. The community center's "Main Street" of services includes banking, a wellness center, dining, coffee shop, reading room, craft space, and post office. 540-433-8016.



Architect: SMBW Architects, Richmond
Project: Center for Transportation Research, Virginia Tech

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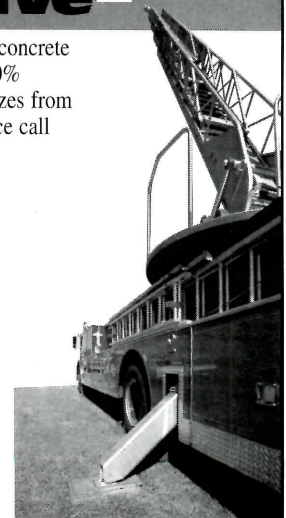
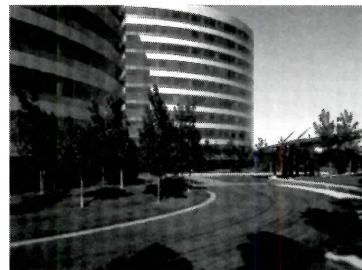
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! Taking Note

It takes a special gift – or a great effort – to design a building that not only encloses the space within its walls, but creates a room outside of them, too. Yet architect David Yancey Jameson achieved just such a space by combining finesse and restraint in a commission for a small garage in Washington, D.C.

Jameson, of David Jameson Architect in Alexandria, was hired to transform a parking pad at the rear of a 13-foot-wide lot into a garage on a \$17,500 budget. To avoid a costly and lengthy zoning variance process, Jameson had to design the shell small enough to stay below 60 percent lot occupancy, the maximum allowed on Capitol Hill. By shaving a corner from the building, he whittled it below the legal limit.

Now complete, the garage forms the rear wall to an outdoor room floored with bluestone and outfitted with custom furniture made from two materials, mahogany and stainless steel, that he also used in the garage. Detailing is spartan, but precise. Bolts used in the steel lintel, for example, align perfectly with the vertical steel muntins of the door. And Jameson mimicked the form of the sliced corner in the shape of steel handles on the mahogany doors.

Such precision can be difficult to achieve. When several general contractors turned their backs on the project, Jameson supervised the work himself. He hand-picked a small group of tradesmen, including a framer, electrician, roofer, mason, and metal worker. From there, he designed with an eye on the budget and shopped for fabrication methods that wouldn't exceed it. The door handles, for instance, might have cost \$350-\$400 through a general contractor. Jameson got them for \$50, because he knew the metal worker's plate roller would only accommodate two-inch-wide stock and he adapted the design accordingly. For construction of the curved outer wall, Jameson economized by having the roofer, who installed the lead-coated wall caps and flashing, also build the copper-clad wall.

—T. Duncan Abernathy, AIA

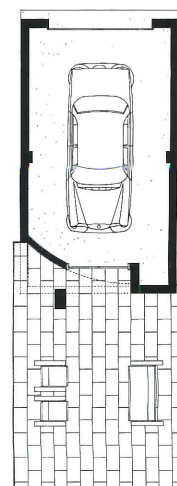
It All Starts With a Place to Park



The garage's delicate details and the richness of materials provide a pleasing backdrop for the small urban garden.



Seen from the alley, the garage is an unpretentious addition to the streetscape.



Photos: Hoachlander Photography Associates