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Traditions in Architecture

For many, the term “traditional architecture” conjures images of stately homes in the Georgian mode or even modest Cape Cod cottages. Some “traditional architecture” firms are known solely for their work in restoring historic buildings and interiors or designing new work in a historicist manner. Other firms—the non-traditional kind—still draw on architectural traditions. For them, the term “tradition” is defined beyond aesthetic or formal considerations to evoke a set of approaches to building systems, plans, or materiality.

Of course, Modernism represents as much of a tradition as, say, Palladianism. To put it another way, the act of borrowing Ralph Adams Cram’s brand of Collegiate Gothic, for instance, is no different than borrowing Le Corbusier’s pilotis, free façades, open floor plans, ribbon or factory windows, and roof gardens. Design is part of a continuum that draws together ideology, technical ability, educational influences, and the marketplace. The stylistic culture wars within architecture between Modern and Traditional have more to do with taste than the relevant qualities of competent design work.

In the 1970s and 1980s, terms like traditional architecture, Modernism, Post-Modernism, Late-Modern architecture, Neo-Palladian architecture, or Neo-Classicism generated a lot of print and created new debates about best or, perhaps, most esoteric precedents. These were useful debates, as a generation of scholars and architects uncovered what had been obscured through education or influence: “minor” French or English Classicists, the Russian avant-garde (c. 1900-1914), and experiments with iron and concrete in the nineteenth century. The interest in these terms and their meanings was also reactionary, in some ways. The “failed” social experiments of Modernism and the failing structures erected under that banner prompted many pundits, architects, and students to reconsider fundamental questions about architecture’s practice as it related to its history.

Categorical design imperatives aside, many of the ideas that define these terms are still alive in architecture firms today in conversations about architecture’s formal or stylistic attributes. These ideas are also alive in how the systemic functions of older buildings (from two, three, and four centuries ago) have been mapped onto terms like “sustainability” or the ghastly “sustainism.”

As you read about Kerns Group’s research, Ayers Saint Gross’ Monticello visitor’s center, or Glave and Holmes’ Washington and Lee renovation, keep an open mind to some of the nuances embedded in “traditional architecture.” Traditions, after all, are matters of practice and building and only idiomatically about what looks right.

—William Richards
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Kerns Group studies Washington’s 16th Street corridor to develop a framework for the new Third Church of Christ, Scientist. By Deborah K. Dietz

Ayers Saint Gross’ Monticello Visitor’s Center earns LEED Gold in the Jeffersonian grain. By Jennifer Pullinger

Glavé and Holmes Architects ease history’s tensions at Washington and Lee University’s Newcomb Hall. By R. Tyler King

new developments in design

design, technology, and the marketplace

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On the cover:

Next issue:
Review of Regional Architecture

Interior Design and Landscape Architect Directories
Market Driven

Architects expand horizons in the Middle East and Africa, but a lack of infrastructure and governmental support poses problems.

A few years ago, Studio27 Architecture was asked to review the feasibility of designing a world-class soccer stadium in Juba, Sudan. Soccer is a major pastime in Sudan—so big, in fact, that its capital Khartoum boasts the oldest soccer league in all of Africa. But the Washington, D.C.-based firm quickly learned that, although the desire for a stadium might be there, the infrastructure was not.

Infrastructure is just one challenge facing American architects working in the Middle East and Africa. War, regime changes, uncertain financing, logistical hurdles, culture differences—all are potential barriers to working in this part of the world.

According to Todd Ray, AIA, Studio27 principal, developing the stadium would have required shoring up the airport runway for bringing in materials, constructing a road wide enough to transport equipment five miles to the construction site, diverting water from the White Nile to a small water treatment facility, establishing an on-site energy generation plant or solar array, and collecting stormwater and gray water, among other things. “Although it was very interesting,” Ray says, “the lack of infrastructure was definitely a project killer.”

Yet, American architects are increasingly viewing the Middle East as a profitable and rewarding market, especially given the region’s ongoing building boom and the concurrent stateside construction slump. Last September, the American Institute of Architects opened its first chapter in the Middle East, representing only its fifth chapter outside the United States. From its office in Dubai, AIA Middle East covers a broad region including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen.

In a statement announcing the new chapter, Steven Miller, FAIA, the chapter’s fellowship director, cited the need for greater interaction and oversight among American architecture firms working in the Middle East and North Africa. Miller estimated that more than 25 American firms are currently employed in the region—more than those representing Europe or Asia—and that those firms tend to use more architects than those from other nations.

Local firms are in on the action too. Studio27 also designed a residence in Juba, called House Suliman, that got mired in land ownership issues but is now awaiting construction. Perkins & Will’s D.C. office has developed high-rises in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. RTKL Associates, which is headquartered in Baltimore and has an office in D.C., opened offices in the UAE in the last two years. And Norfolk-based Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering has landed commissions for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Far East, designing facilities across Africa.

HOK has planted a flag in the region as well. The firm’s D.C. office tripled its revenue between 2006 and 2007 because of its Middle East commissions, and the sector has stayed strong despite the recession. Recent projects include a residential tower for The World development in Dubai, the Doha International Airport in Qatar, and the Central Bank of Kuwait.

“It was smart for us to tap into that market, especially in the past couple years when the local developer work has dried up,” says Roger Schwabacher, AIA, a senior associate and project architect in HOK’s D.C. office. “We got into that market even before the recession, and it has helped us to avoid layoffs.”
HOK is responsible for designing a new virtual city around the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, including 200 residences, community centers, and other buildings. The firm concentrated on creating a landscaping and irrigation zone within a central park, thereby limiting individual green space and creating a more urban feel to the community.

The KAPSARC project is aiming to be one of the first, internationally, to be certified under the LEED for Homes rating and is helping to foster a new sustainability market sector in the Middle East.
Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company was commissioned by a humanitarian organization to design a master plan for the new Angola Central Highlands University, including its first academic building, known as the Access Academy (above). The open-air design (below) aims to sit lightly on the land and create an intersection between progressive education and African tradition.

The firm is currently engaged in a massive project for the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Like other wealthy nations in the region, Saudi Arabia has sought to increase its international prestige by hiring Western architects to create a new architectural identity. The main KAPSARC building, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, is made of modular six-sided cells and emphasizes connectivity through courtyards, indoor gardens, underground tunnels, and roof terraces. HOK is responsible for designing a new virtual city in support of the main campus, including 200 residences, along with community centers, utility facilities, and a photovoltaic array and wastewater wetlands. The project is going for a LEED Platinum rating by employing solar and wind power, as well as sustainable irrigation and landscaping, among other elements.

HOK partnered with a local Saudi firm, Scado Architects, to develop construction drawings. "We don't have anyone on the ground or on the construction site," Schwabacher says. "It's been one of the big challenges." Schwabacher extols the benefits of working with a local firm—accountability and credibility among them—but adds that the culture shock and language barriers can be daunting. "But once you get into the technical aspects of designing and building," he says, "the language is pretty universal."

If oil-rich countries are all about building, then war-torn nations are all about rebuilding. In Angola, an African nation that has been devastated by civil war, the government has worked to educate and train its young people in the years since an armistice was declared in 2002. Recently, SHAREcircle, an Illinois-based humanitarian agency, awarded a commission to Norfolk/Tampa-based Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company to design a master plan for the new Angola Central Highlands University, including its first academic building, known as the Access Academy.

The fractal-inspired, village-like campus design seeks to combine the best of Western notions about higher education with African traditions and culture, according to Steven W. Gift, AIA, design principal. Yet challenges remain. The client is now seeking governmental approval of the plan before it can start fundraising. Because much of the surrounding province was destroyed, the required infrastructure is lacking. Still, the experience is richly rewarding, according to Gift. "Starting from scratch in any circumstance related to planning and design, with no context, is daunting," he says. "When you operate in a foreign culture, all questions are new again. You can take very little for granted, and you learn a lot. But when you see the impact of higher education on these people, you can sense the power of that transformation." —Kim A. O'Connell
Social networks are dynamic and instant ways of communicating, putting your firm's image and reputation at stake in new ways.

We confess. Like many architecture firms, Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company has been slow to get its feet wet with social media. But we have been watching and learning from how others are leveraging online communities to recruit and retain talent, manage brand, and find leads.

The AIA's KnowledgeNet (think of it as LinkedIn for architects) is a forum to share collective resources with thousands of like-minded colleagues. The site is structured as a collection of more than 15 AIA Knowledge Communities and member-created communities on topics like practice management, according to Kathleen Simpson, who led the seminar. It also might be just the place to dip that toe in the water in a more controlled environment. Architizer is another way for architects to connect with architects, view projects, search for jobs, and learn about competitions.

What about architects who are generating social media content? Washington-based FORMA Design is a small firm with some big ideas. Its three principals take responsibility for posting to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—and they say it is driving business their way. One principal, Andreas Charalambous, AIA, says his firm also recommends social media strategies for clients as part of branding and graphics packages. FORMA uses Facebook to drive interest to its work and Charalambous likes it because it's more immediate than updating FORMA's website. Charalambous and his partners created a company page and more than 350 friends and clients have "joined" already.

"We are careful not to overwhelm [clients and potential clients] with unsolicited messages," says Charalambous, who sends links to FORMA's bi-annual newsletter and announces special news, awards, or the firm's sixteenth anniversary. "There isn't a post every day [and] we don't pontificate," he says. "The message has to be important enough that the receiver is willing to take five minutes to look or read."

YouTube requires the most effort for FORMA, but it has also been most successful. The firm's videos to show before-and-after images of interior projects are produced in-house. Before-shots often appear in black-and-white, so they are instantly readable against the after-shots, both of which are coupled with a music soundtrack. Gone are the days of lugging portfolios to a potential client's door. Charalambous takes his iPad and shares images or videos.

"Very rarely do people come to us without having seen our work somewhere online," he adds. Magazine articles are nice (and the firm has been widely published), but viewers can't interact with a printed page. "Potential clients have to see you over and over again on the website, YouTube, Facebook, and in print. It's an integrated part of who we are and what we do," he says.

FORMA's principals do not blog, however, which is contrary to the approach a lot of other firms have taken in terms of getting their message out. Ayers Saint Gross and Shepley Bulfinch both have excellent blogs with regular postings on important topics by principals. Their efforts take a committed investment by the firm—including time and energy in developing meaningful messages. HOK has probably set the gold standard for its comprehensive social media program. Its Life At HOK blog is an effective recruitment and retention tool that unites 25 regional offices across three continents.

The bottom line on social media, as far as HOK, Shepley Bulfinch, Ayers Saint Gross, and FORMA are concerned is: don't do it just to do it. Do it if you have something to say. Otherwise, it's counter-productive. They have all developed a strategic plan that centers on finding the best forum (or outlet) for outreach.

A few things to think about:

Consider investment and ROI. Time is money, after all, and keeping social media current and meaningful takes time. Do you have the resources to invest? Train your firm's voices to represent you and establish a policy for proper behavior. In other words, make certain that your firm's employees use appropriate language and that they understand copyright law when it comes to sharing images. Remember, in the virtual world, once you put something out there, you can't take it back. Evaluate content carefully.

Our firm has developed an internal blog that has become a nice forum for design discussion. Perhaps by the next time we write, we'll be tweeting!
While I have never really been influenced by the work of Phillip Johnson, I have always thought he had a way with words. In thinking about Johnson's famous negation, "You cannot not know history," I am sometimes amused by the ongoing architectural debate between Tradition and Modernism. The debate, as it has evolved over the last 30 years, tends to focus on style: pitched or flat roof, steel and glass versus masonry and wood, abstraction versus representation, heroic object or unassuming background building. Or, the debate focuses on differences between past and present, zeitgeists, technologies, fabrication methods, contexts, or cultures.

A far more interesting angle is the evolutionary common ground that undergirds good architecture. This common ground may include attention to structure as a means of architectural expression, an interest in revealing how a building is made, an attitude toward natural light and climate (to admit it, to control it), in the interaction between building, site, and so on. During the so-called Modern Movement in architecture, which began shortly after 1900 and reached its apogee in the 1960s, technology, ideas about urban form, and the intersection of mass-production and consumer culture allowed us to live spectacularly unsustainable lives. Air conditioning in place of ventilation, burning oil in place of efficient building envelopes, and short-lived materials and construction techniques created much larger carbon and physical footprints than were needed.

There are some ideas from the first half of the twentieth century that we can draw on, many of which have precedents that go as far back as Palladio. It is no surprise that all of the modern masters, like Le Corbusier, Mies Van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn, had classical influences in their training. In some cases, they began their careers designing historicist buildings. It is in this area—sustainability and style—that a richer discussion about technique can take place. After all, architects are obliged to be knowledgeable about the history of architecture and to be able to apply lessons from this corpus to our own bodies of work.

In the mid-80's, a young couple bought a small farm site in Mount Airy, Maryland, with a prefabricated house rapidly closing in on its planned...
obsolete. They subsequently built a barn for their machines (including a prized 1949 Farmall tractor). Anticipating a long-term habitation of the site, they also planted an allée of elms leading to nowhere in particular.

Twenty years later, they asked our firm to design a new house and add to the existing landscape. While I have always admired an allée as an approach to a house (Hugh Jacobsen refers to it as a drum roll), it seemed to me that approaching a tiny house by car in 2010 is different than approaching a Veneto villa on foot or an Eastern Shore manor house by carriage. The energy of the approach should be deflected, lest it overwhelm the little house—a drum roll, but without the ending symbol crash. Rather than build the main body of the house right at the end of the allée, we proposed to sidestep this powerful axis—the way a bullfighter sidesteps the bull with the tease of the cape. The porch of the Allée House spans the drive that continues on to the barn, creating a contemporary porte cochère.

Inside, the principal living spaces are elevated to take in the views in a piano nobile strategy familiar from the work of both Le

**Utilizing the time-honored piano nobile strategy, McInturff Architects elevated the Allée House to sidestep the entry drive and elevate the living space's vantage point.**

**An allée of elms dominates the site (above) and the porte cochère (at left) allows the owners to survey the landscape element without destroying its function as a processional path.**
Corbusier and Palladio. It's an approach that has been used by many architects as a way to separate the living quarters from the "profane" ground plane, which was the domain of farm animals for Palladio and cars for Le Corbusier. In a further nod to Le Corbusier and the Villa Savoye, we floated the Allée House's second floor on a recessed black base.

Even though we demolished the existing house, the original basement and fireplace remain to give visitors clues to the story of the site—a sort of folly, or ruins in the landscape—either real or fabricated. Here, the still-functioning fireplace is a now remnant in the landscape and finds a new context in relation to the new house.

House on the Potomac River, another one of our projects, is sited on a bluff overlooking both the C&O Canal and the Potomac River in Cabin John, McInturff Architects elevated the living spaces and used extensive glazing along the southwest façade at House on the Potomac River to enhance its water prospects.
In shading the southwest façade with operable, computer-controlled blinds with a "second skin," the design team created an interstitial loggia.

Maryland. Our goal was to resolve the conflict between the extraordinary southwest views and the need to control sunlight, glare, and heat gain generated by that orientation. The metal-clad living spaces are elevated in a bar, or rectangular volume, which run parallel to the ridge and the river and overlooks the treetops. Guest rooms are housed in a separately zoned wing above the garage as part of an overall energy strategy, which includes geothermal heat pumps, radiant heat, natural ventilation, active shading systems, and foam insulation.

The large, single-room living space of the main house opens to a loggia that is protected by roof overhangs and a fixed sunshade above door level. Operable, computer-controlled exterior blinds protect the interior from harsh direct afternoon sun and enclose the loggia as a shaded buffer space. Bedrooms below on the first floor share concrete masonry-walled private courtyards.

I have always loved the dappled light admitted through shutters of any building, old or new. The effect is recalled in the Potomac River House with the use of modern technology to adapt to the sun as it moves. Another piano mobile (like the Allée House), the tectonic ideas of the light metal boxes above the heavy masonry walls, and sun shading with electronic louvers come together to reinterpret ideas that pre-date Modernism.

Also common to the Potomac River House and the Allée House is a simple, repetitive structural rhythm that recalls Gothic architecture as much as Mies. Long, thin plans set up for easy cross-ventilation reference both Glenn Murcutt and eighteenth-century “telescope” houses on the Chesapeake Bay. The projects are also united by an awareness of the difference between glazing north and south façades—the latter gets more windows. On this last point, we have tried to evolve the modern glass box to respond to orientation while still maintaining the magic of transparency so enticing in much early Modernism.

I don't think of history as quotable—postmodernism took care of that—but as a frame of reference, not to be ignored and not something that stops at a certain point. In the end, the only worthy argument is between doing something well, or not. As Duke Ellington said, “There are two kinds of music. Good music and the other kind.” —Mark McInturff, FAIA
Tablets and slates have taken precedence over traditional, mobile communication methods. In some ways, we are back to square one—the Ancients had their clay tablets (and no data plan). Today’s tablets pay homage to these devices and, since the early-2000s, they have defined a growing genre of laptop in which a stylus-driven screen can twist and fold back on itself, covering the keyboard and providing a flatter, more planar form factor. Without a dedicated keyboard, the tablet is a sleeker, more nimble device. You might even call it downright pharaonic.

At January’s Computer Electronics Show (CES), the spotlight on mobile technologies shone brightest on tablets and slates. In particular, an array of Google Android devices amongst a shallower assortment of Microsoft Slates, Blackberry Playbooks and, in its debut, the Palm WebOS tablet. Currently, most of these are listed as “coming soon” and those that are actually on store shelves are merely toy-like impressions of their true potential. But, since last April, Apple’s iPad has set the pace with what’s become the quintessential icon of tablet computing and, perhaps, a future model of personal computing. The iPad combines elegant design and efficient, integrated operating system that moves the consumer closer to a true computing device that combines smart-phone with desktop computer. It’s not quite a computer, of course, but easier to use and more responsive than an iPhone. It also enables instant access to information through WiFi or 3G network communications. In short, it’s a device that will affect the way the design professionals work.

Members of Charlottesville-based Gregg Bleam Landscape Architect transitioned their office from printed portfolio to mobile tablet. Using iPhoto on his iPad, firm founder and principal Gregg Bleam easily shares projects and design data with clients. “As landscape architects, we rely heavily on presenting precedent images during client meetings. It’s often difficult to describe a particular plant to a client without an image especially when you are referring to many different plant types in a project,” says Bleam.

Access to info helps team members answer client questions immediately without having to “flip through a book to find an answer, which can be disruptive,” he says. “If the client requests a printed portfolio I can easily produce one by sending the iPhoto images off to Apple to be bound and printed.”

Outside the client meeting, portability, functionality, and network access are key for field work. David Alder, a principal at Little Diversified Architectural Consulting in Durham, North Carolina, adapted an iPad to be his primary computing device. “I used to have my laptop open all day at the office but it now stays closed,” he reports. “When you’re meeting with a client, the laptop creates a barrier when it is opened up and the iPad doesn’t have that barrier because it’s flat like a piece of paper.”

Alder can access most of his apps and information from his office’s cloud server and that allows him to engage with more design specific applications like AutoCAD WS for viewing and editing files and documents in a mobile environment.

Design’s alchemy is still not an application you can buy, but the way design happens has changed within this mobile environment. Beyond the capital required to buy into a completely mobile workflow, overhead costs and, ultimately, project costs will go down for one thing. But, even as mobile computing is about the individual’s relationship to their device, a mobile workflow may, in fact, make design more collaborative.

For a list of mobile apps and other tablet-related URLs visit Will Rourk’s blog at http://rezn8r.wordpress.com

R. Tyler King is an editorial intern at Inform and studies architectural history at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Deborah Marquardt does public relations for Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company. Her writing has appeared in national magazines.

Mark McInturff, FAIA, is the founder and principal of McInturff Architects in Bethesda, Maryland.

Kim A. O’Connell is a writer based in Arlington, Virginia, who has written for Preservation, Architect, Traditional Building, National Parks, and The Washington Post.

Jennifer Pullinger is a freelance writer in Richmond, Virginia.

Will Rourk is a digital media specialist in the University of Virginia Library System’s Digital Media Lab.

Nicholas E. Vlattas, AIA, is the Chief Operations Officer for Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company.

Guastavino Vaulting: The Art of Structural Tile
By John Ochsendorf
New York: Princeton Architectural Press
2010, 256 pages, $60.00

For a starving student, one of the great deals in New York is a bowl of clam chowder and all-you-can-eat crackers at the Oyster Bar in the belly of Grand Central Station. The real feast, though, is reflected in your shimmering bowl: the Guastavino tiles above. You don’t have to go far before finding more of the Guastavino Tile Company’s terra cotta handiwork in New York or elsewhere (the book lists over 600 projects in 36 states and six countries). Remarkably, the Guastavino Family—the Valencian émigré Raphael, Sr. and later, Rafael, Jr.—and the company’s successors Malcolm and William Blodgett kept the business going for 80 years.

In the Mid-Atlantic, there are more than two dozen projects that feature the company’s patented Tile Arch System, including Jefferson’s (and McKim, Mead, and White’s) Rotunda at UVa, St. Matthew’s Cathedral and National Cathedral, both in Washington, the West Virginia State Capitol, and Richmond’s Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. North Carolina is a small but important chapter in this span. Guastavino père built a home in semi-retirement at Black Mountain after working with Richard Morris Hunt on Biltmore. In his last work, Guastavino designed the relatively spare Basilica of Saint Lawrence (1903), in nearby Asheville, where his body rests today.

Ochsendorf, a Fulbright recipient, Rome Prize winner, and MacArthur Fellow is an assiduous researcher and sticks close to the archival evidence in this history. He is also an engineer and the book draws together tectonics, social history, corporate history, and biography to tell a long overdue—if uncritical—story. Handsomely illustrated with historic images, plans, and sections (as well as Michael Freeman’s stunning color photography), Guastavino Vaulting is an important work of scholarship. It’s the first, to my mind, that spotlights one of the great artisan families long neglected in monographs and histories of Gilded Age architecture in America.

—William Richards
Kerns Group studies Washington’s 16th Street corridor to develop a framework for the new Third Church of Christ Scientist

By Deborah K. Dietsch

Washington’s 16th Street, the major thoroughfare leading to the White House, has long been a platform for grand urban visions. A Senator’s wife named it the “Avenue of Presidents” and lobbied to have the Lincoln Memorial placed along its axis. During the 1900s, embassies, mansions, churches and cultural institutions sprung up along both sides of the downtown corridor. Those buildings on the stretch of 16th Street from Lafayette Park to Florida Avenue are now protected as part of a city-designated historic district.

One of the street’s most unusual structures is the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, a Brutalist concrete church complex designed by the firm of I.M. Pei on a block near the White House. In recent years, the church has sought to replace its 1971 landmark with a new sanctuary and office building, sparking a firestorm of controversy and a legal battle settled in favor of the church last fall.

In the midst of this preservation fight, church leaders tapped Arlington’s Kerns Group Architects to study the urban patterns of the 16th Street Historic District so they could better understand and respond to their setting with context-sensitive design. “The reason we undertook the study was to inform ourselves about that landscape,” says Darrow Kirkpatrick of the church’s redevelopment committee. “We wanted to understand what had gone on around us, how we could fit in and what would work well on the street.”
The assignment led architects Brian Frickie and Glenn Canencio of the Kerns Group to document the buildings within the historic district through photographs, drawings, and three dimensional computer models. “We were interested in learning more about the bigger picture, to figure out the scale, massing, setbacks, all the things that give the area its identity,” says Frickie. “We wanted to know more about how monumental buildings like churches became punctuations in the urban fabric.”

From their models, the architects discovered two distinctive types of urban design along 16th Street. They found the blocks north of Scott Circle to be dominated by three-to-four story row houses interspersed with open spaces, including courtyards, alleys, and yards. Standing out from these low-rise structures are institutional and religious buildings, such as John Russell Pope’s 1915 Scottish Rite Temple and the Neo-Romanesque Universalist National Memorial Church, designed by Boston-based Allen and Collens in the late 1920s. While few in number, their monumental architecture establishes a strong presence within the northern part of the district.

In contrast, the urban fabric south of Scott Circle is more densely woven so the buildings form a continuous wall along the street. Notable religious and institutional landmarks, such as the Pei Third Church, nearby St. John’s Episcopal Church designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, and the National Geographic Foundation, are smaller and less prominent than their bulkier commercial neighbors within the blocks.

In both parts of the historic district, Frickie found the churches and institutional buildings to share similar ways of welcoming visitors to their front doors. He studied sections between the street and building frontage of various landmarks to identify three types of transitional spaces: a paved area with few plantings, a strip of landscaping framing a plaza and a gardenlike setting similar to the front yard of a home.

“These spaces change the entire feeling of moving from the public realm to the building itself,” the architect says. He notes the modernist Pei church, which cannot be reached in a direct line from 16th Street, does not conform to any of the types.
Modeling the blocks along 16th Street (top), revealed two types of urban fabric. North of Scott Circle, churches and institutional buildings stand out from their surroundings (Model A at right), while south of the circle (Model B) they are overshadowed by adjacent structures.

Monumental Buildings from Florida Avenue to Lafayette Park

1. St. John's Episcopal Church
2. Third Church of Christ Scientist
3. National Geographic Foundation
4. First Baptist Church
5. Carnegie Institution of Washington
6. Foundry United Methodist Church
7. Jewish Community Center
8. St. Luke's Episcopal Church
9. Church of the Holy City
10. Masonic Temple
11. Universalist National Memorial Church
12. Freedom Baptist Church
13. Augustana Lutheran Church

Distinguishing Characteristics of Urban Fabric

**Urban Model A**
- Monumental buildings are the most relevant presence in the block.
- Big building among small surroundings.
- Classical model.

**Urban Model B**
- Monumental buildings are the smallest presence in the block.
- Small building among large surroundings.
- Breaks with classical model.
From an analysis of street frontage, Frickie moved to the architecture of monumental buildings within the historic district to analyze the make-up of their designs. A comparative chart of their essential components, including massing and roof shapes, reveals few commonalities. "We expected the religious institutions to be similar in terms of architecture," he says, "but we were shocked to find that was not the case."

While most are sheltered by porches and colonnades, less than half incorporate a tower and only one—St. John's church—features a lantern. The only design feature common to all the institutions is a plinth on which each building rests.

Frickie says understanding the nature of these monumental buildings is critical to creating architecture that strengthens the character of the historic district and will help institutions like the Third Church develop designs consistent with the area.

"This gives the church a tool to answer the questions of how
An analysis of the monumental architecture along 16th Street (above) reveals the plinth to be the most common feature of all the structures.

Kirkpatrick says the Kerns Group study will help shape an appropriate design strategy for a new sanctuary and an office building on the Third Church site. "This study helps us to put together an approach so we can move forward with selecting an architect, working with the planning office and start the process of building."

monumental buildings fit into and can be created along 16th Street," he says. "It helps to inform the public conversation."

A section of the space between one institutional building and the street (above) reveals varied treatment of paving and landscape.
We all know of Thomas Jefferson's many passions, but perhaps the one least universally well known—but just as significant—was his deep interest in ecology, horticulture, and open, unspoiled spaces. These will become more widely known to visitors of his "little mountain" many years to come through Ayers Saint Gross' Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center at Monticello. The $43 million, 42,000 square-foot complex opened to the public in April 2009, and since then it has earned a rare distinction: it is the first visitor center at a World Heritage Site in the United States to become Gold LEED certified, the second highest certification awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council.

That merit aside, the project was "by far the most significant that the Thomas Jefferson Foundation had undertaken since 1923, when it acquired Monticello and some of Jefferson's land," says Ann Taylor, Executive Vice President of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation—and no doubt a long time in coming.

When we visit popular historic sites or attractions, we come to expect a certain level of amenities and "pre-show entertainment" before the main event. Colonial Williamsburg, for example, has a bustling, full-service visitor center that acts as a hub of information for the entire Historic Triangle. There, visitors can find access to ticket stations, exhibit and theater space, ample parking, shuttle service, and a pedestrian pathway that leads directly to the historic district. Before Monticello's new construction, on the other hand, its aging, inadequate visitor center facilities paled in comparison to its Tidewater contemporary. "The existing visitor amenities were really not suf-
Ayers Saint Gross included two green roofs (above) and a circular drive (at left) meant to evoke the circuitous roads that spiral down the mountaintop from Jefferson's Monticello.

The visitor center is built on three levels—incorporating a shuttle bus station, a courtyard, and the education entrance—to take advantage of the natural topography.
Sustainably-sourced materials such as cedar, brick, and Virginia fieldstone were used in the construction of the five pavilions, including the Welcome Center and ticket office.

Wkh the opening of the new visitor center, the public can finally experience the kind of building that provides a “twenty-first century gateway to exploring Thomas Jefferson,” adds Taylor. While Williamsburg’s visitor center is a monolithic structure that houses all of its amenities, Monticello’s complex is divided up into a series of five well-proportioned, interconnected pavilions around a central courtyard, each of which contains the much improved theatre, classroom, and exhibition spaces, as well as new gift shop, café, and ticket lobby. “It has certainly proven to be both inviting and comfortable. It’s a really beautiful, almost Zen-like public space,” says Taylor.

The newly expanded visitor center was built on the exact location of the former ticketing office and shuttle bus station, which were situated just down the mountain from Monticello—a sustainable design choice in and of itself. “The imprint of the new center was made as small as possible to disturb as little of the surrounding woodland as possible,” says Taylor.

The design team also wanted the building to “sit on the land lightly,” says Adam Gross, FAIA, a principal with Baltimore-based Ayers Saint Gross, the building’s design ar-
The architect's energy-saving design strategy included reducing the conditioned area of the overall complex and installing 72 wells that support the buildings' geothermal heating and cooling system.

“One of the things we wanted to do was to fit the building within its context, and that’s not just a sustainable strategy, but an overall architectural and design strategy recognizing, of course, that the house on the mountaintop is the primary attraction,” says Sandra Parsons Vicchio, AIA, a principal with Ayers Saint Gross. With that in mind, the architects approached the design of the visitor center as if it were a dependency—a structure that supports the main house.

While Ayers Saint Gross was inspired by Jefferson's design principles, the architects in no way wanted to imitate his architecture. Rather they took “lessons” from the main house and the layout of buildings on the mountaintop. That included designing shaded porches as transitional spaces for people entering and exiting facilities and added skylights to draw in natural light.

Other notable construction materials and installations that paved the way to Gold LEED included two green roofs, a geothermal heating and cooling system, and regionally sourced building materials like Virginia fieldstone, which was harvested from a local landowner and picked the “old-fashioned” way—by hand, then delivered by pickup truck, says Phil Kirby, Senior Vice President of Barton Malow, the visitor center’s construction manager.

Kirby says the team’s decision-making was motivated more by sustainability and less by LEED standards. “Because of the decisions that were made, like the stone, those were decisions that would have been made whether LEED was there or not. Monticello was committed to working locally already and wanting to use materials that were found locally,” he says.

Of course, the most important goal with the new facility was improving the visitor experience. In this case, the architects created a layout that allows visitors to more freely explore the site without having to take a “highly regulated path,” says Vicchio.
The outdoor courtyard (above), which serves as the complex's lobby function, leads to the African-American burial ground (at left) via a new greensward.

“We very consciously created an experience that was not a forced path, that we hope was very gracious and hospitable for visitors that would allow them to move through the experience at their own pace, to experience something or chose not to experience it at all, and really be able to structure their visit to suit their interests and their time,” adds Vicchio.

While the architect's design succeeded in the area of sustainability, paying homage to Jefferson's care for the land as well as overall architectural ideals without mimicking his style, and creating world-class facilities that promote the foundation's mission of education and preservation, the true success of the building rides on how well it achieves the objectives of the program.

“We were very pleased—against the backdrop of a national economic recession and declines in visitation at many historic sites—that visitation increased in 2009. We basically had the same amount of visitation in 2010, so we've had three years of very strong visitation at Monticello. And certainly the visitor center has contributed to that,” says Taylor.
Ayers Saint Gross made extensive use of glass as well as carefully proportioned windows that are more vertical in their orientation than horizontal (below), which not only serves to conserve energy but also highlight the wooded landscape (above).

Project: Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Educational Center, Monticello
Architect: Ayers Saint Gross Architects + Planners
Landscape Architect: Michael Vergason
Landscape Architects
Contractor: Barton Malow Company
Owner: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc.

RESOURCES
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Barton Malow Company (see ad., inside-front cover); WINDOWS: Duratherm Windows (see ad., p. 1); MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS: Mueller Associates, Inc. (see ad., p. 37); PLASTER & DRYWALL: Piedmont Plaster and Drywall (see ad., p. 37); CIVIL ENGINEERS: RK&K (see ad., p. 37); EXTERIOR PAINT: Sherwin Williams (see ad., inside-front cover); GREEN ROOFING SYSTEM: American Hydrotech, Inc.; LUTRON SHADES: The Specialty Group
Back to the Future

Richmond-based Glavé & Holmes eases history's tensions at Washington and Lee University's Newcomb Hall

By R. Tyler King

A string of five temple-front buildings known as the Colonnade crowns the hilly campus of Lexington's Washington and Lee University. Even if it served as a stately (if humble) emblem for the 262 year-old school, the Colonnade had sorely needed a renovation for many years. In 2009, Washington & Lee hired Richmond's Glavé & Holmes Architecture to begin the process with the 1882 Newcomb Hall (the original School of Commerce), last renovated in 1936 when a three-story library wing had been added to the rear. Over the last 74 years, the interior of Newcomb Hall had been partitioned for office space and classrooms—encasing original elements of the building, in some cases.
Glavé & Holmes' most recent renovation, completed in the summer of 2010, challenged its design team to not only refreshing the building's look, but liberate its original elements. The university hoped that the architects could breathe new life into the building, without changing the historic character that was familiar to so many alumni," says University Architect Thomas Contos. "The intended effect was that when you enter the building, it does not appear to have been renovated," he explains.

The biggest discovery for the project team was a monitor supported by a wooden truss system on the third floor. "We wanted to preserve the sense of the fact that it had been an
A monitor (at left) has always crowned Newcomb Hall, but it was not always understood from the interior. Glave & Holmes made it a central feature, while the surrounding glazing gives a sense of the third floor’s original configuration as a singular space, and highlighted the expanse of the wooden truss system.

open space, even though when we got it, it was just a corridor,” says Glave & Holmes architect Glenn Suttenfield, AIA. By strategically glazing the walls under the monitor that define the student lounge and its adjacent seminar rooms, clerestory windows now allow light from the monitor to flow freely throughout all of these spaces.

“One of the things we like to do with projects like this—that I think in this economy makes more sense than ever—is to celebrate the original architecture. Find something about that that you can use to give a distinctive identity,” says Lori Garrett, AIA, Senior Principal and Vice President of Glave & Holmes, who also directs the firm’s Higher Education Studio. Newcomb Hall makes the case that sustainability and preservation do not have to be conflicting endeavors, with different sets of rules. The two may be more synonymous than we think. Garrett explains, “And sometimes it’s not a matter of creating or designing something new. It’s a matter of uncovering what’s there already.”

Grimacing behind the “historic character” of an old building is the absence of adequate accessibility and safety standards. Like most renovation-cum-restoration projects for a modern university, two of the biggest hurdles are incorporating technology and updating the building’s systems. “I love those projects where you start with something so bad that it’s hard to fail,” admits Garrett. Prior to the renovation, disabled students had no way of accessing the building, offices had hardly any light,
and the entire building was dangerously below code. “Here was the fire exit (strategy): go down this hall, crawl out of this window onto a roof, and then jump,” explains Garrett.

In addition to rethinking life safety and accessibility issues, the Glavé & Holmes team was charged with aligning the faculty’s programmatic changes with sustainable strategies in historic preservation. “In some ways, reusing a building is the ultimate in sustainability, because the other alternative is tearing it down and building new,” notes Garrett. In aiming for LEED Silver certification, the team added bike racks and employed local or repurposed materials whenever possible, among other moves.

Keeping Newcomb’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places in mind, the project team ranked interior spaces according to their historic significance. “All of the windows were removed, stripped, repaired, weather-stripped, and put back. Almost every door and almost all of the hardware were reused,” reports Suttenfield. Newcomb Hall’s exterior received a light restoration, repaired plaster, and re-pointed masonry. Inside, small changes were made to make the building more durable without compromising its character. The design team replaced the entry foyer carpeting with Virginia soapstone, for instance, which is found throughout the rest of the Colonnade’s buildings.

“Part of the give-and-take with these old buildings is that the floor plans are inefficient. But, you can cram extra little things in there that you would have never thought to have put in a new building,” says Suttenfield.

One of these additions was the double-sided, split-level elevator, concealed at the end of the main corridor—a vital
cision for accessibility that manages to compensate for the quirky changes in level within the building. Reconfiguring the classrooms and offices entailed moving two smaller departments out to house only the History and Anthropology/Sociology departments, which are part of the university's liberal arts-focused College housed throughout the Colonnade. "This ensured that those programs would have the room for long-term growth, and that the building would retain a mix of classrooms, offices, and student spaces," says Contos.

Today, the classrooms and student spaces are outfitted for the savviest of teachers. In one of the two main classrooms, professor Ted DeLaney, who heads the Department of History, demonstrates all of the features he controls from his new streamlined lectern as a ceiling-mounted camera follows him pacing back-and-forth in front of a fresh chalkboard. Yes, chalkboard. Despite the glitz of the new teaching aids, members of the WLU faculty are still fond of chalk. The project team embraced that old-school quality, easing what Professor Delaney calls an overall "tension between history and function."

"We didn't want to go from loveable, tweed-jacket professor to hot, cool, and kind of stuffy professor," says Suttenfield. In fact, the bookcases in faculty offices tend to lean more toward "tweed," with library ladders to access the upper shelves. "It creates a workspace which is both historic in character, and practical and efficient for today's teaching and research methods," says Contos.

Light from the monitor now filters into the new seminar rooms (above) while the exposed wooden truss system gives occupants an understanding of how it is supported. A set of twin stairs in the rear hallway (at left) runs up the course of the building. To the left of this stair, a new elevator compensates for these irregular changes in level.

Project: Newcomb Hall renovation
Architect: Glave & Holmes Architecture (Lori Garrett, AIA, principal-in-charge; Glenn Suttenfield, AIA, project architect; Eleanor Barton, interior designer)
Contractor: Kjellstrom + Lee Construction (Fulton Sensabaugh, president; Andrew King, project manager)
Owner: Washington and Lee University

RESOURCES
Architect: AECOM, Arlington  
Project: United States Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan

AECOM is designing $511 million of new facilities and upgrades to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and providing offices and living spaces for workers and guests as well as structured parking, new landscape and quality of life facilities. Tel: 703-682-4900 / www.aecom.com

Architect: Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering  
Project: Naval Hospital Renovation, MCB Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

The new 93,000 s.f. LEED Silver outpatient clinic and emergency department addition provides comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatment in a healing, non-threatening, and family-oriented environment. Tel: 757-455-5800 / www.clarknexsen.com

Architect: HKS Architects, Richmond  
Project: Johnson City Medical Center Surgery Addition, Johnson City, Tennessee

LEED-certified design for 100,000 s.f. addition replaces and expands existing surgery services as first phase growth for future bed-tower replacement, new hospital entrance, and branded identity. Tel: 804-644-8400 / www.hksinc.com

Architect: Baskervill, Richmond  
Project: Octagon Partners, Charlottesville

This project involves the conversion/renovation of Martha Jefferson Hospital into a mixed-use office, residential and hotel facility. Tel: 804-343-1010 / www.baskervill.com
The 251,000 s.f., 1,400-student facility will feature state-of-the-art instructional spaces that support a STEM (science, engineering, technology and mathematics) curriculum. The project will pursue LEED Silver certification.

Architect: Moseley Architects, Richmond
Project: Huguenot High School, Richmond
Tel: 804-794-7555 / www.moseleyarchitects.com

The 216,000 s.f. facility will house a variety of indoor sports competition and training venues. The project includes a field house, indoor track, 15 basketball courts, a fitness center, and pools.

Architect: Price Studios, Richmond (design architect)
Project: SportsQuest Sports, Aquatics & Fitness Center, Midlothian
Tel: 804-521-2266 / www.pricestudios.com

This 3 story, 67,000 s.f., Class A office building is the first in a multi-phase development of 25 waterfront acres targeting LEED Silver certification. Later phases include 6- to 12-story buildings with structured parking and amenity services.

Architect: Odell
Project: Research Forest Lakeside, Houston, Texas
Tel: 804-287-8200 / www.odell.com

The renovation of the 20,000 s.f. building included a new main entrance, accessibility upgrades, energy efficiency upgrades, and a new roof.

Architect: PSA-Dewberry, Inc. Fairfax
Project: Building 1 Renovation, Cheltenham, Maryland
Tel: 703-698-9050 / www.psa-dewberry.com
On the Boards

Architect: Shutler Architects, Arlington
Project: Private Residence, Sarasota, Florida

They don't build 'em like they used to. At 32,000 s.f., this cottage will be just enough for the couple it is designed for. Tel: 703-465-9080 / www.shutlerarchitects.com

Architect: WileyWilson, Richmond with IronBridge Construction, Inc., Chester
Project: Radford Fire and Emergency Services Center, Radford

The two-company 16,000 s.f. facility will service the Radford Army Arsenal, while enabling fire prevention education and training. The design incorporates LEED Silver guidelines. Tel: 804-254-7242 / www.wileywilson.com

Architect: SK&I Architectural Design Group, LLC, Bethesda
Project: Halstead 1 at Halstead Square, Merrifield

This 210,000 s.f., mixed-use project includes 216 loft-style residences, retail, landscaped courtyard, and 2 levels of underground garage parking. Tel: 301-654-9300 / www.skiarch.com

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Congratulations to Ayers Saint Gross on the success of Monticello's Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center—a Virginia AIA Award of Excellence winner.

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Covering a narrow slot between two buildings with a skylight sounds like an easy assignment. But for the Kerns Group Architects of Arlington, Virginia, it meant finding a way to ensure all the components could be disassembled in the future.

The renovated space lies within one of Old Town Alexandria’s most treasured historic landmarks, Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church. Designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1817, the neo-Gothic sanctuary was expanded in the 1950s with a fellowship hall built eight feet to the west. The resulting passageway between the two structures became a maintenance headache in letting in rain and snow.

In enclosing the space, Thomas Kerns, FAIA, adhered to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties by preserving the integrity of the historic fabric. “We came up with a solution that is removable and durable,” says Kerns.

The slanted skylight is attached with 24 bolts inserted into sleeves within the stucco church wall. Gutters are held up by screwed-in steel brackets and sprinkler pipes threaded through the supports. The new concrete floor is separated from Latrobe’s structure by a backer rod that can be pulled out like rope. A new staircase allows choir members to ascend from a basement rehearsal room and line up in the garth before entering the church to sing.

—Deborah K. Dietsch
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