

AIA GULF STATES REGION CELEBRATES ARCHITECT DESIGNS

The outstanding design created in the Gulf States Region of the American Institute of Architects is impressive, both in quality and diversity of project types. From complex technical restorations to simple, yet elegant, projects, the jurors recognized the design contributions and value of thoughtful architecture in all the projects reviewed. Recipients of the 2009 AIA GS Region Honor Awards program were celebrated at a reception in San Francisco during AIA's national convention in May.

David Baird, AIA of Baton Rouge, presided as Awards Chair and assembled a talented, diverse group of jurors from the Phoenix/Tucson area. Jurors included Mark Roddy, AIA, Eddie Jones, AIA, Teresa Rosano, AIA, Marlene Imirzian, AIA, and Maria Salenger, AIA. Of the 117 entries from Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the jury gave the following twelve awards:

Merit Awards

House in the Woods (new construction) by **archimania** of Memphis was designed for a young family in rural Tennessee. Set on seven wooded acres, the home's design draws from its context by utilizing raw, natural materials and simple forms, keeping the home's budget at \$100/sf. The home's design is significant in that it offers a simple solution to rural housing while providing an alternative to an "off the shelf" ranch style home commonly found in the area.

Jurors commented:

Modern Vernacular. Well proportioned. Delightful interior spaces – especially the screened in porch.

Bienville State Office Building (new construction) by **Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, APC** (New Orleans) and **Washer Hill Lipscomb** (Baton Rouge), a Joint Venture, creates a state office building within the Capitol Park in Baton Rouge. It is a contemporary interpretation of the Art Deco vocabulary of the 1929 Capitol Tower. This design visually ties all of the new state office buildings in the complex with the historic art deco Capitol Tower and Capitol Annex buildings.

Jurors commented:

Restrained proportions. Related to the context well. Elegant detailing.

Anthony Chapel (new construction) by **Maurice Jennings + David McKee Architects** of Fayetteville designed a chapel for the botanical gardens located at Garvan Gardens in Hot Springs. The chapel provides a venue for weddings, musical performances, and special events. A glass infill in all exterior walls permits a transparency that allows the chapel to become one with its surroundings.

Jurors commented:

Beautiful and well executed building. Similar to Thornecrown Chapel.

Alex Haley Interpretive Center (new construction) by **Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects** of Memphis was designed to enhance the educational mission of this State Historic Site and offers a venue where the public can experience first-hand the life and career of this distinguished Tennessee author. The design concept is simple yet quite compelling, and sustainable strategies were employed to minimize energy consumption.

Jurors commented:

Simple project with dynamic roof -- thoughtful positioning of the building on the site. Building conceived as a clear diagram that focused on the historic home.

Honor Citations

Mendenhall Elementary School Classroom and Media Center Addition (new construction) by **Duvall Decker Architects, P.A.** of Jackson replaces the oldest facilities of a rural elementary school where priorities are ease of operation and maintenance, plus long-term durability. Staggered building floor plans result in offsets that create widened pauses between pairs of classrooms. From this pause in the hallway, two classrooms and the exterior views from each are visible, allowing a teacher to easily monitor two classrooms.

Jurors commented:

Jurors were impressed by the humility of this project and the designer's ability to do a great deal with very little. The shifted plan was a simple and elegant solution.

United States Courthouse (renovation/restoration) by **Waggoner & Ball Architects** of New Orleans has been called “the best court architecture that can be seen today” (Judge Edith Hollan Jones). A disused 1853 auditorium was rescued and repurposed to meet the particular needs of the District Court while restoring the building’s historical integrity.

Jurors commented:

Another elegant renovation. The jurors were particularly impressed by the double wall used to bring light into the courtroom and the contemporary exit stair in the rear of the building that compliments the original structure.

Grand Opera House of the South, Restoration Phase I (renovation/restoration) by **Donald J. Breaux, AIA, Architect**, of Lafayette. The opera house had been closed for more than 60 years. Design consideration was to restore the opera house to its original grandeur, while upgrading the structural systems and adding new theatrical lighting, curtains, sound system, and handicap seating capabilities.

Jurors commented:

This project had a high degree of difficulty. A theatre restoration that requires ADA upgrades and a multitude of technical issues can be a daunting task. This project met those requirements while remaining true to the original building. A beautiful project.

Honor Awards

Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church Sanctuary Roof and Steeple Repair (renovation/restoration) by **Waggoner & Ball Architects** of New Orleans is a restoration of a prominent 1875 Gothic Revival church that suffered catastrophic damage during Hurricane Katrina. Handmade bricks selected and blended to match the size and color of original units was just one element of the careful analysis and historic photographic study that allowed the firm to prepare the true restoration.

Jurors commented:

Jurors impressed with the technical ability required to accomplish this restoration. The project involved complex detailing, rigorous analysis and mastery of construction processes.

Fulbright Building (renovation/restoration) by **Marlon Blackwell Architect** of Fayetteville was intended to revitalize the civic quality of an historically and architecturally significant library building, while inserting a new program of professional offices. The generating idea or theme for the design is “Ship in the Bottle.”

Jurors commented:

Jurors appreciated the introduction of subtractive light wells that provided natural light into the heart of the building. It was an effective use of an existing modern structure. Interiors were dynamic spatially and enlivened with dramatic inserts as well as a bold use of color.

Gentry Public Library (renovation/restoration) by **Marlon Blackwell Architect** of Fayetteville is a new modern public library surgically emplaced in the 100-year old brick shell of a former hardware store on Main Street in a small Arkansas town. The thoughtful details employed to present the artifacts of the brick structure to the public are intended to extend the gritty expressive character of the library with another layer of time, character, and modernity – a new civil and urban presence for the town of Gentry.

Jurors commented:

Jury appreciated the designer’s thoughtful use of the existing tin ceiling and other historical artifacts – respectfully transforming the structure into a dynamic contemporary building.

Prospect. 1 Welcome Center (renovation/restoration) by **Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, APC** of New Orleans is a visitor orientation and welcome center housed inside of an historic warehouse, serving as the initial greeting point for all visitors to international arts biennial. Prospect.1 New Orleans, the largest biennial of international contemporary art ever organized in the U.S., exhibits 81 artists in museums, historic buildings, and found sites throughout New Orleans. The Welcome Center for P.1 is housed in one of these found spaces – the historic Hefler Warehouse – and serves to orient visitors to the city and the biennial.

Jurors commented:

Jury saw this as an architectural folly that placed itself within a rugged unfinished space. Its use of simple materials and sophisticated design energized the building with an economy of moves.

The Eclectic Eye (architectural interior design) by **archimania** of Memphis was the design solution for a client who wanted to generate the same level of curiosity and consideration through the architecture as their delivery of exclusive frame selection in this upscale optical boutique. Visually dynamic display cases are incorporated into the walls to minimize floor space used, create visually recognizable sales zones, and to open the space's narrow perception. Translucent panels define the testing area and speak to the idea of seeing. Materials and finishes are simple, amplifying the colors and shapes of the frames on display.

Jurors commented:

Jurors saw this project as a simple, elegantly detailed interior space. The design utilized a sophisticated yet simple lighting and display strategy that proved to be very effective. Use of color and materials was commendable.

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