

HIGHER-EDUCATION FACILITIES DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM/2009

This is the fourth year of the Boston Society of Architects' biennial Higher-Education Facilities Design Awards program. Co-sponsored by SCUP/New England, the awards program was created in 2003 to focus on college and university facilities.

This year, the jury had the opportunity to examine 60 submissions. The entries reflected more residential and laboratory/science buildings and fewer arts and student centers than what we've seen in past programs. We also reviewed fewer campus design projects than in years past and wondered how current financial constraints will affect the quantity and type of new higher-education buildings.

We were pleased to again see clear attention given in most instances to articulating the basics of sustainable design, with many clients aspiring to meet LEED standards.

There were some nice examples of addition by subtraction: renovation projects where the result simplified the program or design rather than complicating it.

The jury thought it would be helpful to have the cost/square foot included in the materials for all projects. Although unlimited funds do not necessarily equal great projects, the number of smaller projects with modest budgets submitted was fewer than what the jury would like to have seen.

We encourage future program submitters to include information about the program, particularly details about the client's involvement and preferences. A full sets of photos—including interior and exterior shots, before and after pictures, and existing site photos and site plans—help tell the project's story. Details on the site orientation with compass notations aid the jury's review.

Ultimately, we were drawn to 13 well-conceived, carefully executed projects, which represented a nice balance between renovations and new construction.

Serving as jurors in design awards programs such as this is an educational opportunity. We wish to express our appreciation to BSA and to all of the design professionals who submitted work to this program for making this a rich experience for us.

The Jurors

Steven Heikin AIA of ICON architecture, Boston

Martha A. Pilgreen AIA of Perry Dean Rogers | Partners Architects, Boston MA

Dean Sakamoto AIA of Dean Sakamoto Architects, New Haven, CT

Toshihiko Taketomo AIA of Arlington, MA

HONOR AWARDS FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Gary C. Corner Geochemistry Building in Palisades, New York

Designed by Payette

It's hard to do a lab building that connects well to the outdoors, but this lab and academic building for a geochemistry department makes it look easy. The program-component forms and sections of this project are brilliant: the design couples a three-story block of 10-foot-tall offices with a two-story block of 15-foot-tall laboratories for a small footprint on a highly visible, naturally beautiful site. The atrium space is inviting, and the scale and connectivity among the spaces dedicated to the diverse programs feel right. We love the economy of the plan, the beautiful stone base and how the building's massing and cladding create a sense of lightness. The submission portfolio beautifully documents the project.

Silliman College for Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut

Designed by KieranTimberlake Associates

This renovation and preservation of Yale University's largest college is a masterpiece. The art of the project lies in the details, as executed by a keen-eyed design team that knew when to extend and repair existing conditions and when to resolve their composition through the insertion of new forms. In developing the new components, the architects pushed the envelope, making risky choices that we believe will prove edgy, durable, and elegant for years to come. The result is an engaging dialogue between old form and new purpose, each improving the other.

AWARDS FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Building F at Northeastern University

Designed by William Rawn Associates

We appreciate this building for how it builds on the development of this downtown campus where each structure has unique features. Designed to accommodate housing for honors students in addition to significant academic space, the building is organized into three wings connected by transparent bridges, hallways and lounges that reveal the building's interior life inside to the greater campus. By splitting the building into splayed sections, the design allows for more bedrooms with windows, and intimate living and study spaces. Bold gestures abound in the suite living, meeting spaces and open spaces.

Grant Recital Hall for Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island

Designed by Brian Healy Associates

Placed within a small existing carriage house, this new recital hall is beautiful almost to the point of being over-the-top. The new hall fits well within the existing masonry shell, which required extensive interior renovation, and is supported by a new entry, lobby, reception area and musician's room. The bold interior spaces promote interaction between performers and the audience, in both the classroom and performance settings. We relished the perforated bamboo screen, which elegantly surrounds the stage to improve the room's acoustics.

Jonathan Edwards College Renovations for Yale University

Designed by Newman Architects

This comprehensive renovation and restoration of a 1920s residence hall is subtle and sensitive. The project seamlessly blends new and old. We were impressed by masterful restraint and detailing, including the exposure of fossilized foundation fragments and the use of a Jerusalem limestone replica of the gravestone of the building's namesake to adorn a new main stair. By cutting a new stair and elevator cores through existing structures and adding an underground tunnel to complete a basement circulation loop, the project connected three separate buildings into one network of complementary elements.

Multi-faith Center and Houghton Memorial Center for Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts

Designed by KieranTimberlake Associates

The design of this contemporary chapel for a multi-faith religious and spiritual-life program has a lightness of touch that fits well within its historic context. The modest project expanded the college's faith center by creating a new space in the former crypt beneath a 19th century chapel. The well-detailed space sings through simple gestures, such as a backlit resin-encased worship room that transforms ordinary basement space into a glowing jewel box. The addition of an on-grade ramp makes the facility accessible to people of all faiths and extends its use to other campus and community activities.

Northwest Science Building for Harvard University

Designed by SOM

This well-integrated project replaces forgotten spaces that had turned away from the surrounding neighborhood with a new building stitched into the university fabric by cross-campus paths and new yards. Landscape furniture makes for meaningful, purposeful outdoor spaces where students, faculty and visitors meet and interact. The glass and aluminum curtain wall over wood spandrels is a creative gesture that demonstrates the significant possibilities of this type of material combination. We appreciated the high-tech details and found the basic scale gestures very strong and the design balanced and accessible.

PDSI project for Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Designed by Payette

This renovation and infill project is timely as an architectural planning concept. By connecting existing buildings together with an addition, this brilliantly conceived plan creates new space connected to historic structures via a network of light pedestrian bridges. It's a transformative move for the school that ensures that the "Infinite Corridor," which serves as its iconic image, evolves and remains viable for another 100 years. The pedestrian bridges provide spatial events that activate the corridors, and the atrium, in its new form, engenders engagement and interaction among users.

Sculpture Building and Gallery for Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut

Designed by KieranTimberlake Associates

We laud this new arts complex for its beautifully detailed interiors. The project met a significant programmatic challenge by using a parking garage with ground-floor retail space to create perimeter street frontage where none had existed—and, by doing so, to invite the larger community in. The loft-space studios are successful, and the relationship between the studio building and the small gallery is strong. Daylight pours in through the perimeter walls, filling the interior with natural light to enhance the artwork. We also liked the gentle swelling of the building's exterior walls and the relationship to exterior spaces.

CITATIONS FOR DESIGN

Balamand University, Mother Mary Dormitory in Balamand, Khoura Valley, Lebanon

Designed by Sasaki Associates

Although the completed project falls short of the excellence of its design; —especially in the attention given to scale as reflected in the design sketches—it was beautifully conceived as a hilltop complex sensitive to local climate and culture. The project represents both the opportunities and challenges of international work, as it is rare for U.S. firms to have the opportunity to work with this kind of landscape and the palette of forms it evokes. The sketches show the designer's intent, which promised magical moments in olive groves and spaces that are truly special in terms of their materials, quality, scale and privacy.

Earth Science Building and Museum of Natural History for Amherst College

Designed by Payette

This design fits well into the architectural context of its classic New England college campus, while drawing from a crisp, contemporary palette of details and materials. The use of the terra cotta is beautiful and inventive, and subtle blend of brick and terra cotta detailing emerges only when you get close to the building. We also appreciate the many thoughtful components of the interior program, such as the dramatic display of the museum's renowned dinosaur footprint collection lit by LEDs.

Kenyon College Athletic Center

Designed by GUND Partnership

Sited in an open field, this impressive gym makes no apologies for its size. The simple but elegant “container” contrasts strongly with the complex interior arrangement. Visitors enter the center of the building into a transparent core and disperse to different venues. Wherever visitors travel within the building, the open vistas across the interior landscape allow visual participation in many different activities. The care put into the interior architecture transforms it from a standard gym utility structure: it is crisp, clean, light and bright, and well-scaled, with all sports served by a common set of facilities—all contributing to bring life to recreation.

The Rose Center Yale University Police Station and Community Center

Designed by William Rawn Associates

We applaud this innovative combination of a community center and a campus police facility for being so well-integrated into its neighborhood. Located behind the Grove Street Cemetery and next to a HOPE VI neighborhood, the project is ideally sited to create an effective transitional landmark between the school and the larger community. The design is inviting, open and focused on reaching out to the edges of campus. The building glows like a lantern in the evening, emitting the feeling of security and welcome that comes with being a source of light in the night.