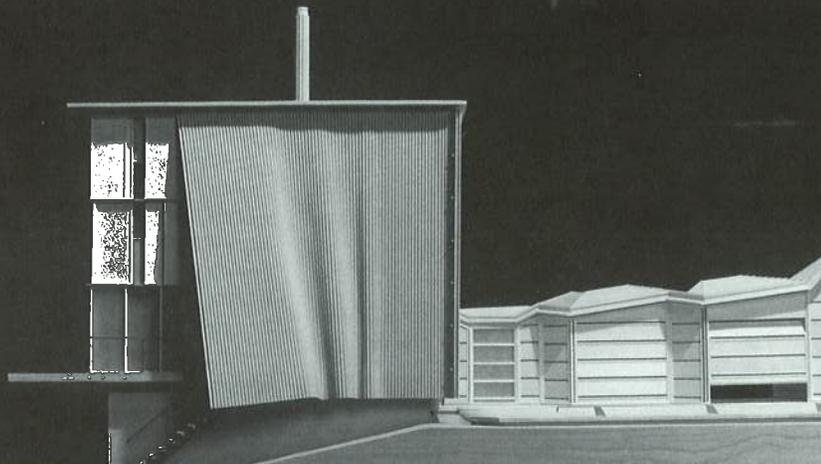


photo: Office dA

photo: Inex Zalduendo



1999 BSA Young Architects Award  
Zahedi Residence, Weston, MA  
Office dA



1999 BSA Design Award  
for Adaptive Reuse  
Abasto de Buenos Aires  
BTA Architects, Inc.



photo: Brian Vandeen Brink

1999 BSA/AIA-NY Sustainable  
Design Honor Award  
Maine Audubon Environmental  
Education Center, Falmouth, ME  
Van Dam & Renner/  
Carol A. Wilson Architects

## Q: Why so many awards?



rendering: Christidis Lauster Radu, Architects

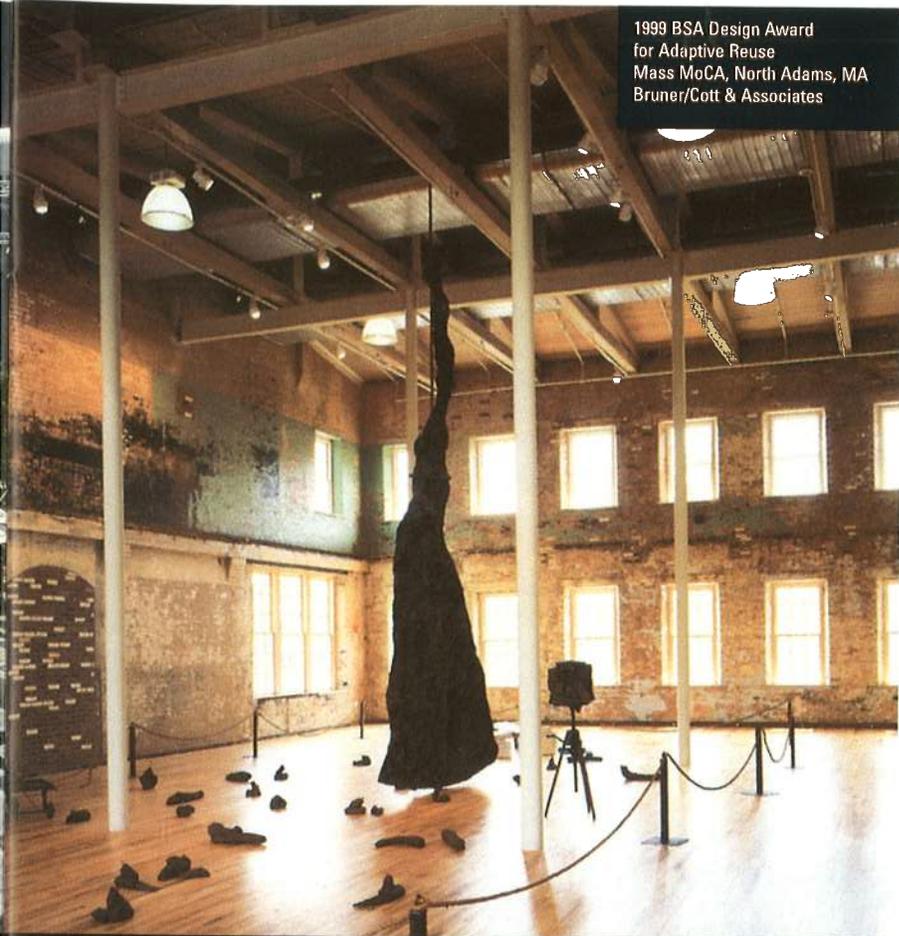
1999 BSA/AIA-NY  
Urban Design Award  
Brancusi Sculptural Complex  
Development and Restoration Plan  
Tirgu Jiu, Romania  
Christidis Lauster Radu, Architects



1999 BSA Design Award  
Sauna Bath, Tyringham, MA  
Artifact Design + Construction

photo: David Joseph

1999 BSA Design Award  
for Adaptive Reuse  
Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA  
Bruner/Cott & Associates



## A: We need them.

by Robert A. Brown AIA, IIDA

**Welcome to the 71st Annual Academy Awards...the Country Music Awards...the People's Choice Awards...the Best of Boston Awards...  
The Clio Awards...The J.D. Power Awards!**

We seem obsessed with anointing the heroes and stars of our country, giving each one the allotted 15 minutes of fame before moving on to the next as fast as we can switch from one TV station to another. But ritualizing our dreams and lionizing our heroes is a fundamental aspect of the American psyche. In our eclectic and diverse society, we share the desire to congratulate all our efforts — not just the most important overall achievement, like the best picture, but each aspect of the endeavor: best writer, editor, sound technician, camera lens developer. By acknowledging each contribution, we are affirming that most American of all beliefs — that we are a classless society. Everyone is important.

The architectural community has followed suit in embracing the awards phenomenon. Locally, the Boston Society of Architects sponsors eight awards programs and eight scholarships or fellowships recognizing excellence in our profession. Urban design, interior design, healthcare facilities, sustainable design, and housing design represent only a few of the categories into which architecture is now sliced, and we duly honor each of them with our equivalent of best screenplay and best documentary.

These awards programs recognize that good architecture today is more than just a beautiful building. Our work, reflecting our society, has become increasingly complex, as design professionals respond more comprehensively to social, technical, and environmental factors in addition to the basic requirement of shelter. By looking beyond form and function, awards programs can serve as vehicles to improve our work. We can encourage greater rigor in less glamorous building types such as industrial, correctional, and utility projects, to name a few. We can gain a better understanding of technically complex buildings such as medical facilities, transportation structures, and research buildings. We can focus attention on projects often overlooked by the design community, such as low-income housing, public facilities, and suburban retail developments. And perhaps most significantly, awards programs can introduce the public to the full impact of architecture — how it affects our lives in many ways beyond pure physical presence.

But not everyone is pleased with the increased fanfare. Many architects criticize the proliferation of awards programs, arguing that the sheer numbers devalue their significance: If everyone is important, then no one is important. The critics worry that specialized awards may tend to marginalize the work that is supposedly being honored. They fear that expanded awards programs will appear self-promoting or excessively self-congratulatory, and that there is a danger of creating a bureaucracy that bestows awards simply to meet a public relations quota.

The response to the skeptics rests with the awards jury, which has the responsibility to determine design excellence. But certain objectives can be reinforced in order to strengthen the jury process. Clear and rigorous criteria for entrants and juries must be established and followed consistently from year to year. Each jury should consist of recognized experts in their fields. Juries must maintain the highest standards and honor only the most commendable projects — and have the confidence and

Why so many awards?

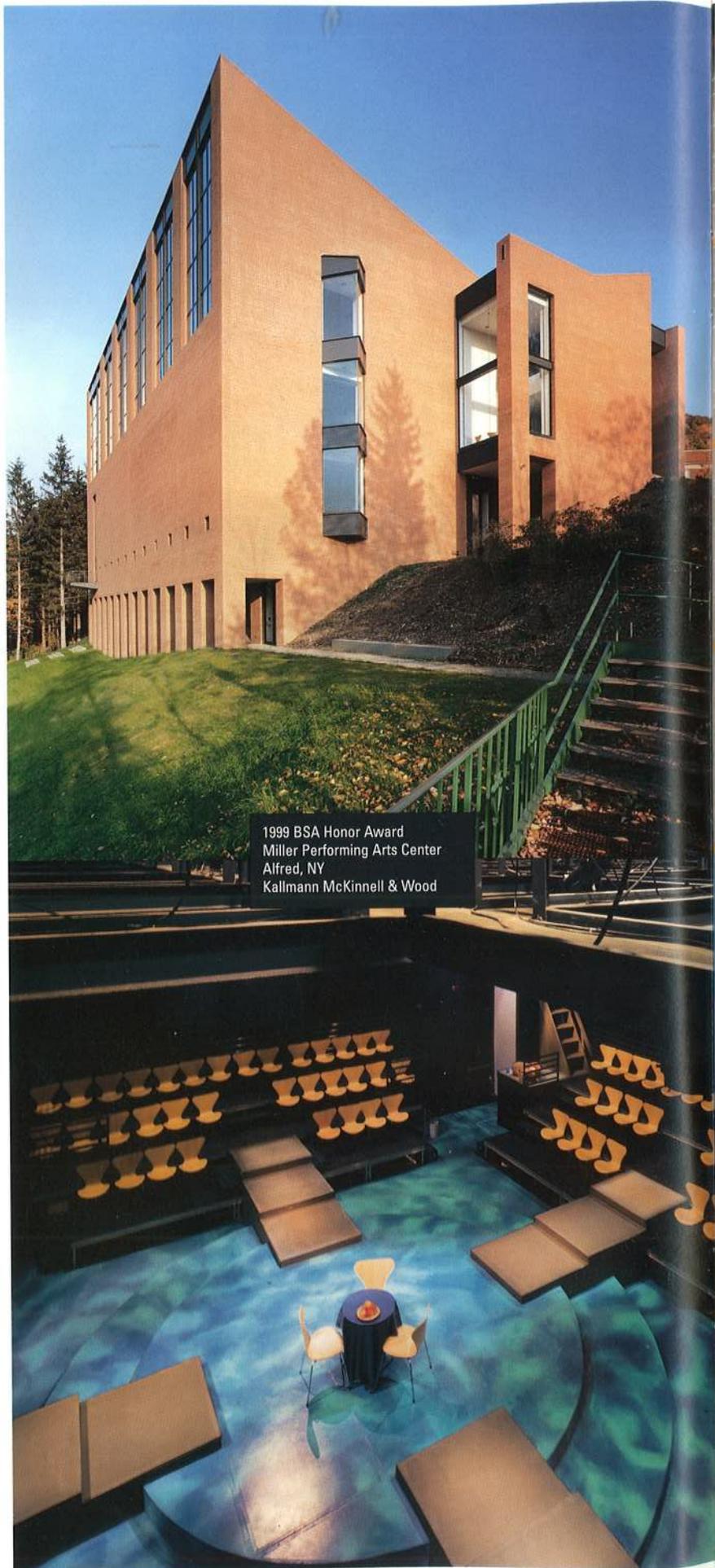
support to bypass submissions that do not meet these rigorous criteria. Finally, there must be a way for juries to actually experience the architecture they are judging; photographic images can suggest design skill but cannot convey the environmental impact of the architecture, or its success or failure with regard to its site, community, and users.

Determining the best architectural endeavor, unlike the Academy Awards, should not be a democratic electoral process. It is important to preserve and enhance the jury system, which can look beyond a popular or politically appropriate choice and delve with an expert understanding into the complex nature of each submission and its significance to the profession at large.

Awards programs serve a purpose beyond recognizing design excellence or adding to the applause already given to the elevated few. These programs have educational value and can enhance the discussion of our profession by demystifying the award selection process itself and making architecture more understandable to all users. We must continue to expand our outreach to a broader constituency — broader even than our clients and our consultants. We should assume the responsibility for educating our neighbors about the complexities of the building process. A more educated and informed community will work toward a better built environment.

An expanded awards program embracing strict selection criteria and high design standards can expose excellent architectural efforts in surprising places. Good architecture consists of more than good buildings — it responds to the breadth of human emotions and needs, engaging the broadest constituencies in its creation. Recognition of these efforts assists us all in raising the quality of our profession — resulting in a better-designed and richer physical environment. ■■■■

Robert A. Brown AIA, IIDA, is a principal of CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares Inc. in Boston. Co-chair of the BSA Design Committee, he serves on the BSA board as commissioner of honors and awards.

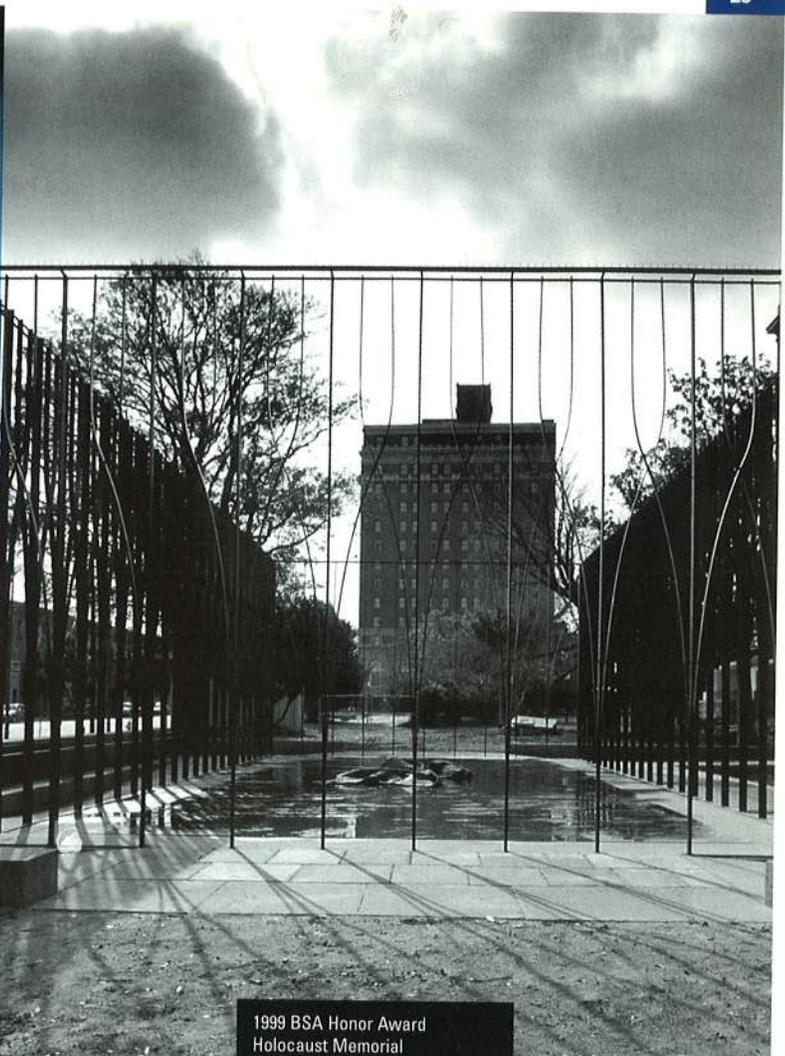


1999 BSA Honor Award  
Miller Performing Arts Center  
Alfred, NY  
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood

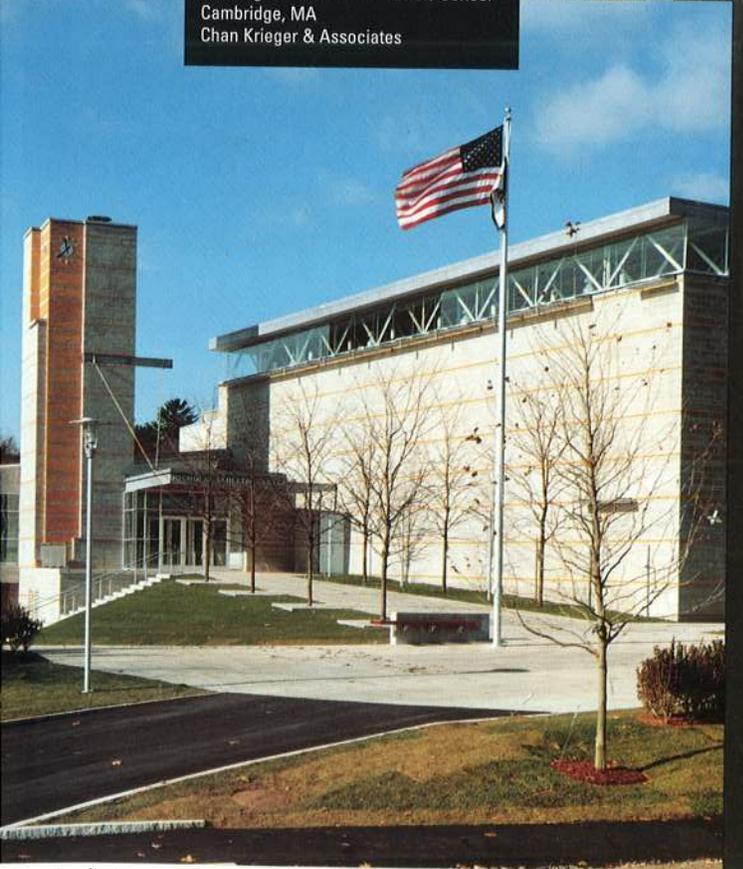
photos: Peter Vanderwarker



1999 BSA Honor Award  
The Nichols Athletic Center at  
Buckingham Browne & Nichols School  
Cambridge, MA  
Chan Krieger & Associates



1999 BSA Honor Award  
Holocaust Memorial  
Charleston, SC  
Jonathan Levi Architects



photos: Anton Grassl

photos: Jonathan Levi Architects