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In the Region/New Jersey

Design Winners

Innovative school projects, including a genomics lab at Princeton, are among this year's architectural award winners. By Antoinette Martin 7

Innovative School Buildings Win Design Awards

Loveladies architects awarded 3 medals for homes on island.

By ANTOINETTE MARTIN

A NUMBER of innovative school projects won awards last month in the annual design competition held by the New Jersey chapter of the American Institute of Architects, including a science center at a private school in Pennsylvania, a public school addition in Paterson and a genomics lab at Princeton University.

The design for the revamped Jamaica railway terminal in Queens that includes the new AirTrain terminal created by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey was also honored, as were three homes in one Long Beach Island neighborhood, all the work of the same architectural firm.

The chapter presents its awards at Princeton University each year to recognize projects designed by New Jersey architects or else built in the state, and to invite architects to explore a fundamental issue in design.

Classicism versus modernism was the theme of this year's gathering, which included a face-off between Thomas Gordon Smith, a University of Notre Dame professor, speaking about how classical principles can and should affect today's designs, and the iconoclastic architect Thomas Mayne. Mr. Mayne founded the Southern California Institute for Architecture in the early 1970's to create designs that would "eschew the normal bounds of traditional forms and materials and surpass the limiting dualism of modern and postmodern."

Mr. Smith was also a judge for this year's design competition, as were Michael Manfredi of Weiss/Manfredi Architects of Manhattan and Stanley T. Allen, the dean of Princeton's architecture school. Gold, silver and bronze awards are handed out to a dozen or so firms.

The two gold medals awarded this year went to architects working in neo-Classical and modern styles: Hillier, a Princeton firm, was recognized for a science center at Solebury preparatory school in Bucks County that reintrepreted the classic rural schoolhouse design, and Michael Ryan Architects of the Loveladies section of Long Beach Island for the modernization and expansion of the Norcross residence, a 13-year-old private home set behind a dune on the island's oceanfront.

The Loveladies firm also won bronze awards for the Kaplan residence, a new oceanfront home featuring an 11-foot-high open area at ground level that frames a view of dunes and sky, and for the new Berkowitz residence on the bay side of the island where prewar and postwar California-style architecture has set the tradition.

"There is a tradition of innovation here, if you will," said Mr. Ryan, whose firm won an award for the design of his personal residence in Loveladies last year. On the other hand, the firm's "architect's statement" submitted with drawings and photos for the design competition noted the limitations imposed by "uninspired, yet strict zoning regulations," which it said allow large homes to be built relatively close to each other as long as they are evenly spaced.

Still, Mr. Ryan and his team of architects managed to create three residences that the judges liked for the way they projected a feeling of openness inside and responded to the outdoor environment and reflected it. "The winning projects seemed to reinforce a connection to the local community," said Hugh Boyd, a Montclair architect who helped to organize this year's Design Day.

At Solebury School in Bucks County, Hillier, too, was working within a natural environment that school officials strive to protect. The campus of the prep school, which sits on 99 acres studded with oaks and willows, a former farm, has an intimate feel that the Princeton architects described as a "rustic agrarian village built around the original farmhouse."

"Rather than creating more typical double-loaded corridors on multiple floors," the architects said, "the Science Center was planned as a single-story L-shaped structure that creates a three-sided courtyard with the nearby library, while also exploiting the north-south and east-west axes for introduction of daylighting and passive solar design." The windows of the 13,500-square-foot building, which is faced in natural cedar, are arranged to frame "vignettes" of the fields and woods, Hillier said. The building was dedicated in May.

The firm also received a bronze award for its plan for a gymnasium at the school that is scheduled for completion in early 2005. The plan includes a two-story exterior entry hall with floor-to-ceiling glass walls, through which a box-shaped steel truss is visible. The truss is designed to be seen as "jumbo tracery behind a translucent enclosure," according to Hillier. It won a silver award for the American International School it designed in Chennai, India, the former Madras. "A primary goal of the project," Hillier's statement said, "is to become a model of sustainable design and fair labor practices for its community."

Local materials — brick, granite and sandstone — were used to minimize costs, and energy-saving features like a rainwater harvesting system were designed into the building, which was completed in August.

Fountains along courtyard walkways provide evaporative cooling to reduce the need for air-conditioning, and each classroom gets light and air from two sides, a feature that architects noted is important in a place where power failures are common.

The architects said that the landscaping was an essential part of the design. The structure will be "completed" as local flowering vines, like bougainvillea, virtually cover the outside of the building, they said in their design statement.

OTHER silver awards went to these projects:

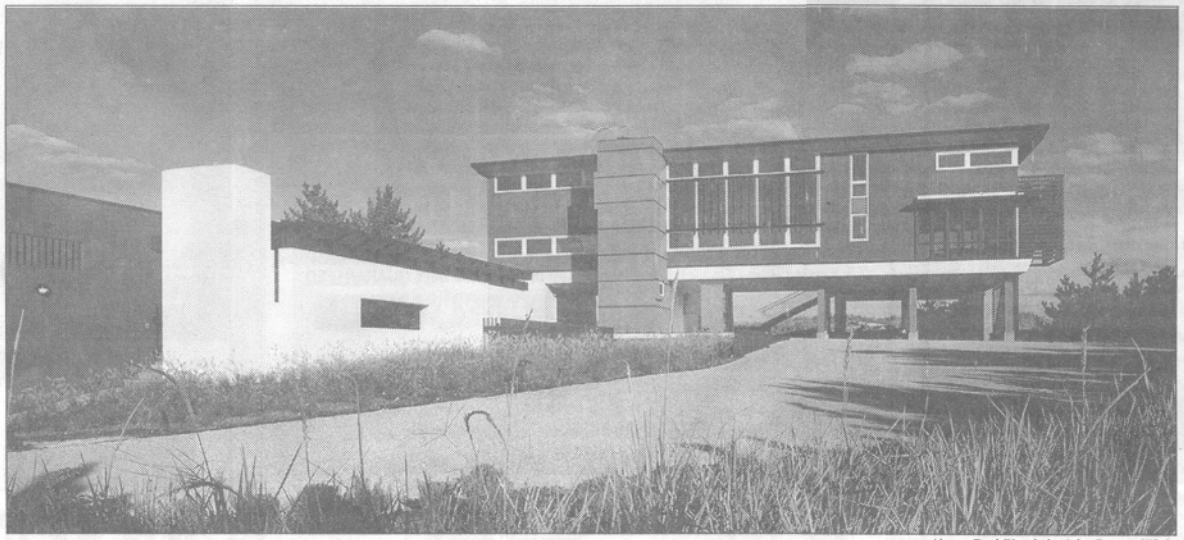
¶Michael Graves & Associates' design for the Martel Residential College at Rice University in Houston. The Princeton architects have created a master plan for the entire North Campus of the university, whose original buildings date from 1913.

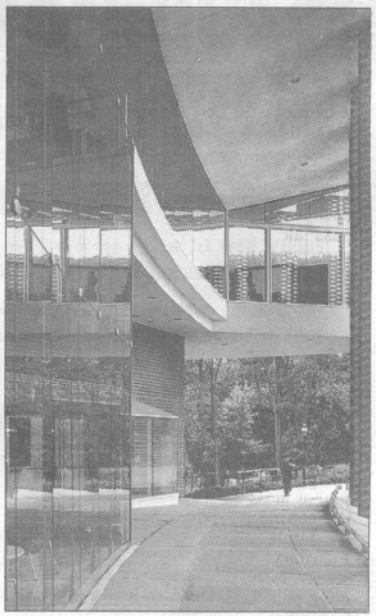
¶The design of Rafael Viñoly Architects of New York City for the Carl Icahn Laboratory of the Institute for Integrative Genomics at Princeton University. Situated between the historic part of the campus with its stone-faced buildings and the brick-clad science complex, the building aims to "bridge both contexts," the architects said, with a skin made of precast concrete panels that have the proportion and color of brick, with a stonelike texture. The building has a glass-faced atrium enclosed by 31 vertical louvers that automatically track the sun in the southern sky to shade the interior.

¶Skidmore Owings & Merrill's design for the Delbarton School Arts Center in Morristown, N.J. The New York firm's SOM Education Lab continues the school's traditional use of stone in three new buildings for theater, music and art, but brings "new vitality" to the campus center with an open plaza design, the architects said.

A bronze award was won by Skidmore Owings' SOM Education Lab and Guenther & Hee architects of Collingswood for their major addition at Public School 25 in Paterson, providing a new gymnasium and changing rooms, dining and kitchen facilities, a media center, classrooms and specialized instruction spaces. The new structure is a linear building running along one side of the school, creating a new inner courtyard playground. Windows in the cafeteria provide views of the new play area and the neighborhood, and glazed "light boxes" funnel light into classrooms from two sides and the roof.

The other silver award went to the Port Authority for its plan for the Jamaica station in southeast Queens where AirTrain, the rail link from Kennedy International Airport, connects with the Long Island Rail Road and New York City Transit. The existing Jamaica station complex of the L.I.R.R., a state historic landmark, is being renovated, as is the subway mezzanine. The AirTrain terminal, which is nearing completion, is a two-level glass atrium, providing a gateway to both passenger services. ■





Above, Paul Warchol; right, Roman Viñoly

The Kaplan residence, above, on Long Beach Island, which won a bronze medal for Michael Ryan Architects and, right, the genomics lab at Princetown University, which won a silver medal for Rafael Viñoly Architects.