Louisiana architects receive top honors in 2018 AIA LA design competition

Architecture firms across Louisiana won 17 awards in the prestigious annual design competition conducted by the American Institute of Architects Louisiana Chapter (AIA LA).

A nationally recognized panel of judges selected 16 winning projects for 2018 from 73 entries in seven categories, submitted by architects across the state. Award recipients were honored September 27 at the AIA LA 75th anniversary gala on at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

Honor Awards were given for seven projects. The winners were ARCH 335 Design | Build Studio, Louisiana Tech University School of Design for Pisces Bridge in Choudrant; C.SILVA Architect & WHLC Architecture for Sanova Dermatology in Baton Rouge; The Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design, Tulane School of Architecture for Hollygrove Shade-Water Pavilion in New Orleans; Eskew+Dumez+Ripple for Tsunami Restaurant New Orleans; Gould Evans + Billes Architects for The Cheick Hamala Diabate’, Institute for the Performing Arts in Kita, Mali; Holly & Smith Architects, APAC, for the Baltzell Building in Hammond; and Lee Ledbetter & Associates for Bienville Houses in New Orleans.

Awards of Merit were presented for nine projects. The recipients were COE Architecture International for The Marke at South Coast Metro in Santa Ana, California and also for Aqua Sports & Spa in Tokyo, Japan; Perez, APC in association with VergesRome Architects, APAC, for the Patrick F. Taylor Science & Technology Regional Academy in Avondale; studioWTA for 1824 Sophie Wright Place and for a Webster Street residence, both in New Orleans; Trahan Architects for a Magazine Street residence in New Orleans; Trapolin-Peer Architects for 850 Tchoupitoulas in New Orleans; VergesRome Architects, APAC, for the Vianney Hall renovation at Saint Joseph Abbey and Seminary College in Saint Benedict; and Waggoner & Ball for the Greater New Orleans Foundation / Center for Philanthropy in New Orleans.

The Members’ Choice Award also recognized ARCH 335 Design | Build Studio, Louisiana Tech University School of Design for Pisces Bridge in Choudrant.

HONOR AWARDS
PISCES BRIDGE, Choudrant (architecture) – ARCH 335 Design | Build Studio, Louisiana Tech University School of Design: The innovative 340-foot floating bridge and shade structure across Lake Alabama connected Camp Alabama’s two sides and reduced the distance between activities for children with mental and physical disabilities who attend summer MedCamps there, and for others who use the facility. Named for the mythological figure of two connected fish, the project enhanced access to fishing with features such as rod holders, lowered guard rail sections and gated fishing jetties. The design also incorporated reclaimed 55-gallon barrels and discarded steel rods from area oil and gas operations.

SANOVA DERMATOLOGY, Baton Rouge (architecture) – C.SILVA Architect & WHLC Architecture: The contemporary design of this medical office on the first floor of a new, modern building relied on simple forms and varied surface textures to separate public areas from clinical areas for skin care procedures, cosmetic treatments and skin cancer surgery without disrupting continuity of the space. Soft colors and natural materials, accentuated by ample natural light, created a fresh, uncluttered, soothing environment that balanced functionality and aesthetic value without feeling sterile or intimidating, generating in an enhanced sense of well-being in both patients and staff.
HOLLYGROVE SHADE-WATER PAVILON, New Orleans (small project) – The Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design, Tulane School of Architecture: The project provided a community gathering place for public education and play with a mechanism to collect, display and distribute rain water. A small neighborhood park built on a former rail line where an underground drainage canal now is located, the site united a neighborhood once divided by infrastructure. Access and funding were acquired through a multi-year collaborative effort with community leaders and private foundations. Design and construction of the pavilion was made possible through a green infrastructure grant from the local water management agency.

TSUNAMI RESTAURANT NEW ORLEANS (interior architecture) – Eskew+Dumez+Ripple: The renovation of a former conference center into a sushi restaurant greatly increased natural light inside and created a visual beacon that attracts evening customers. Carefully crafted lighting in key areas such as the sushi and sake bars provided a stage for the audience of diners. Eliminating three-fourths of the mezzanine area made room for private events. Tables around the perimeter enabled patrons to view the city’s bustling night life and drew passersby inside. Japanese Wagara patterns inspired screening elements and textured surfaces that provide intimate spaces and maintaining visibility.

THE CHEICK HAMALA DIABATE’ INSTITUTE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, Kita, Mali (unrealized project) – Gould Evans + Billes Architects: The design for this proposed facility in sub-Saharan, equatorial Africa highlighted traditions of Malian griots – respected ambassadors, holy men, storytellers, musicians and oral historians - and married traditional construction methods with advanced technology. The flat site was framed by beautiful rock outcroppings and the famous Niger-Dakar Railway. Far from existing infrastructure, it employed passive elements such as metal roofs that fold to collect rain water for cisterns while encouraging interior air flow and PV solar panels that utilize abundant sunny days to power state-of-the-art recording and video equipment.

BALTZELL BUILDING, Hammond (renovation/restoration/adaptive reuse) – Holly & Smith Architects, APAC: Built in the 1890s, the original two-story masonry and wood structure survived an 1896 fire and was renovated into a single story. The adaptive reuse design converted a damaged, vacant building in the historic district into a mixed-use speculative development with nine apartments and lofts, plus space for offices and retail tenants. Courtyards were added to facilitate access, add natural light and privacy and serve as a lobby. The damaged exterior was reconstructed and refurbished meticulously to match old photographs. The project was certified by the National Park Service and the owners received state and federal tax credits.

BIENVILLE HOUSES, New Orleans (residential) – Lee Ledbetter & Associates: A community of five modern row homes was constructed in a vital, re-emerging, post-Hurricane Katrina neighborhood on a previously vacant corner lot with 150-year-old live oak trees. The homes reflected the density of neighboring shotgun houses, but were two-story gabled-roof masses with carefully grouped windows, horizontal slatted screens and porches carved from the front and rear facades. The efficient four-bedroom, two-bath interiors featured efficient organization, skylights, custom millwork and open sight lines downstairs.

AWARDS OF MERIT
THE MARKE AT SOUTH COAST METRO, Santa Ana, California (architecture) – COE Architecture International: This inventive multi-family infill development -- 300 apartment units in three buildings -- was built on a four-acre site in a suburban California office park rezoned for mixed uses. The project featured a one-acre deck with upscale amenities atop a five-story parking garage plus large courtyards and multiple walkways to connect the disparate neighborhood. It skillfully utilized strong building forms of varied height, length and shape and bold color, pattern and texture to bridge vast scale differences between large office buildings and nearby single-family homes.
AQUA SPORTS & SPA, Tokyo, Japan (interior architecture) – COE Architecture International: This private wellness club was a modern reinvention of a traditional Japanese public bathhouse, continuing to provide a hygienic function and serve as a neighborhood social hub. The project linked various unique, function-oriented spaces via sophisticated, modern design elements that were also cost-effective and sustainable. In sharp contrast to busy, chaotic Tokyo outside, the entire interior of the serene, transparent and welcoming structure was designed to reflect calmness and refinement and support high-level personal service that bridged the wide gap between a utilitarian fitness club and a luxury resort.

PATRICK F. TAYLOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY REGIONAL ACADEMY, Avondale (architecture) – Perez, APC, in association with VergesRome Architects: The design team capitalized on the expansive site of a new college-preparatory high school by creating generously-sized classroom, activity, circulation and outdoor spaces that reflect the curriculum’s technology roots and can be used for multiple activities. Classrooms are organized into three pods attached to a free-flowing spine anchored by the cafeteria. In each pod, the classrooms surround a multi-purpose breakout space for hands-on activities and group projects. The project includes sustainability-oriented features to minimize rain water runoff, excessive energy use and labor-intensive maintenance.

1824 SOPHIE WRIGHT PLACE, New Orleans (renovation/restoration/adaptive reuse) – studioWTA: A pair of blighted, adjoining two-story wood structures in the Lower Garden District were transformed into a multi-use property with first-floor residences and second-floor office space. Built in 1857, they were connected by a German baker in 1879 to expand his business and have housed bakeries, offices and residences. Cited as endangered by the Louisiana Landmarks Society and the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission until recently, they were highly visible holdouts in Coliseum Square restoration efforts over the past 40 years.

WEBSTER STREET RESIDENCE, New Orleans (residential) – studioWTA: Modern materials and contemporary detailing created a single-family home that stands out from neighboring historical properties as a highly refined example of clean modernism grounded in careful detailing and rich material choices rather than stark white minimalism. Key design elements included a dramatic two-story front porch, a prominent live oak, a courtyard and custom privacy fence, a shaded yard with a pool, full-length views of trees outside the living room through a large, operable curtain wall; a sunken living space with a limestone floor and soaring 20-foot ceilings, matte charcoal kitchen cabinets and upper-level railings of frameless glass.

MAGAZINE STREET RESIDENCE, New Orleans (unrealized project) – Trahan Architects: In the heart of a city of excess and revelry, this project in the Central Business District’s historic Picayune Place neighborhood represented calmness, contemplation and repose. Sited behind the remaining façade of an 1854 home’s facade that burned more than 20 years ago, the proposed home was a simple parti of a cast-in-place concrete box spaced back from a huge weathered-steel sculpture wall aligned with the four-story antebellum façade. The interior featured museum-quality concrete, glass and steel to enhance reflected natural light.

850 TCHOUPITOULAS, New Orleans (renovation/restoration/adaptive reuse) – Trapolin-Peer Architects: This project transformed a pre-1900 Warehouse District building, preserved the original façade and masonry party walls to envelop new construction infill and created a modern, collaborative, sustainable office and studio for an architectural firm. The first floor became the office lobby, vertical circulation and retail tenant spaces, with office space upstairs. The roof was raised to accommodate a mezzanine level above the second floor used as studio space. A courtyard and wall of glazing allowed natural light deep into the open studio and work spaces and the interior’s contemporary design featured reclaimed wood ceilings.
VIANNEY HALL RENOVATION, SAINT JOSEPH ABBEY AND SEMINARY COLLEGE, Saint Benedict (renovation/restoration/adaptive reuse) – VergesRome Architects, APAC: To prepare for anticipated increases in enrollment, monks at this seminary college decided to renovate and convert an existing 1960 mid-century modern dormitory to a residence hall with single rooms and baths. The redesign created simple, energy-efficient and functionally adept rooms that are well-suited to contemporary use as housing for seminarians. The project preserved the campus’ historical 1958 architecture and National Register of Historic Places designation, thus earning renovation tax credits.

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FOUNDATION/CENTER FOR PHILANTHROPY, New Orleans (architecture) – Waggonner & Ball: This historic urban site offered a rare opportunity to demolish a service station, clean up a brownfield and create a highly visible building with two halves: one for public engagement, offering city views from a third floor outdoor loggia, the other for work, clad in local St. Joe brick with work lofts on the second and third floors. The design incorporated both curves and straight lines to impart a strong civic presence and foster public engagement. The project, to be certified as LEED Gold, included solar screens and a landscaped, permeable asphalt parking lot surrounding a raised courtyard that contains sweet gum trees and a water storage system for irrigation that can accommodate a seven-inch rain event.

MEMBERS’ CHOICE AWARD
PISCES BRIDGE, Choudrant – ARCH 335 Design | Build Studio, Louisiana Tech University School of Design: The innovative 340-foot floating bridge and shade structure across Alabama Lake connected Camp Alabama’s two sides, reducing distance between activities at summer MedCamps for children with mental and physical disabilities. Named for the mythological figure of two connected fish, the innovative design enhanced fishing opportunities with features such as rod holders, lowered guard rail sections and gated fishing jetties. It also utilized reclaimed 55-gallon barrels and discarded steel rods from area oil and gas operations.

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