



New Orleans firms dominate AIA LA design awards competition – with photos

New Orleans architectural firms dominated the prestigious American Institute of Architects Louisiana Chapter (AIA LA) Design Competition, winning all but two of the ten prizes given in the annual competition.

The awards were given during the annual AIA LA Design Conference Awards Banquet, held on September 10 in Lafayette. The firm of Eskew+Dumez+Ripple won the only two Honor Awards given – one for the Ace Hotel in New Orleans and the other for the Orpheum Theatre, also in New Orleans. The firm also won an Award of Merit for the JewelBox at Orbion, which is located in Moscow, Russia. The Ruston firm of Studio Brooks + Emory won an Award of Merit and the sought-after Members' Choice Award for the Larkin Gibbs Memorial Pavilion in Choudrant, LA.

Other New Orleans firms that won Awards of Merit include Nbbj/Blitch Knevel for the University Medical Center in New Orleans, SCNZ for Crescent Care, Waggoner & Ball Architects for the National Disaster Resilience Competition: City of New Orleans, studio WTA won for 704 Marigny, and Markdesign won for Gallier Hall: St. Charles Avenue façade renovation.

ACE HOTEL: The Ace Hotel project in New Orleans was a contemporary 4-story addition of a circa 1928 building including a 234-room boutique hotel, bar, restaurant, meeting spaces and retail. Eskew+Dumez+Ripple designed the addition to reflect the culture of New Orleans, with a carriageway and courtyard, balcony gardens and an eclectic interior. The judges said the addition “illustrates the timeless lesson of using historical architecture as a springboard for new interpretations of modernism, honoring the past while heralding progressive design.”

ORPHEUM THEATRE: This project by Eskew+Dumez+Ripple included the restoration of the historic theatre that is the home of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. It maintains the opulent visual environment and acoustic clarity of the space, while adding a pivotal floor system that provides for a variety of uses of the space, along with adding new private party space, a catering kitchen and offices. Judges said the project was “caring, sensitive and astute in architectural authenticity. The civic identity and architectural trajectory of this cultural touchstone was projects into a high arc to the future.”

JEWELBOX AT ORBION: This live performance venue was imagined as a performan venue unlike anything ever created for the people of Russia. The design by Eskew+Dumez+Ripple transforms the black box theatre experience combining interior performance and exterior site with interconnected spaces. Judges said the design “reflected inspired thinking, masterful design organization and iconic architectural imagery.”

LARKIN GIBBS MEMORIAL PAVILION: The pavilion, designed by Studio Brooks + Emory, provides and accessible outdoor shooting range with specific arrangements for archery and paintball marksmanship at a summer camp for children with a variety of special needs. The design

frames the camp's lake, the gabion wall blocks road noise, and circulates water from a nearby pond. Closed from the outside, it provides an open energy once inside. Judges said the design "illustrates the poetic iconography and sheer fun of camp, youth and environmental sensitivity."

UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER OF NEW ORLEANS: This state-of-the-art 1.5 million square feet academic hospital and clinic designed by Blich Knevel Architects captures the essence of New Orleans' culture and place, and provides a world-class academic medical center. The judges said the facility reflected "excellence in organization, mastery of modern materials, humanity in garden courtyards and interiors, and is a potent expression of civic wellness."

CRESCENT CARE: This project by SCNZ involved a tenant build-out of three floors of a 1958 marine office building into a health center. It includes a large reception area, intake rooms, pharmacy, exam rooms, consultation rooms, laboratory, classroom, kitchen, dental care suite and administrative spaces. The design focused around a "tree of life" theme, with the extensive use of natural materials, leaves and flowers in resin panels. The judges said, "the design colors, textures, lighting and organization elevate and stimulate the human spirit, and illustrates the skill of the architects to work within the rigor of the existing buildings."

NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE COMPETITION: The planning framework for a New Orleans neighborhood by Waggoner & Ball Architects is based on the belief that its urban environments must consider the city's historic, climactic and geographic context, and values water as an asset. It addresses critical challenges around flood risk, climate change and energy interruptions. The judges said, "practical management, incrementally scalable, with human urbanism of transformative potential, the masterplan represents the best of visionary thinking by the architectural profession."

704 MARIGNY: The Marigny Residence was a renovation of a circa 1840 corner store that had undergone several additions and renovations through the years. The renovation involved surgical restoration of original materials with complimentary modern interiors, resulting in a balanced, integrated home complete with custom features and modern amenities. The judges complimented the "masterful space planning within a confined context," noting the spaces were reinvigorated, modern conveniences were integrated, and architectural traditions were authentically celebrated."

GALLIER HALL FAÇADE RESTORATION: Completed originally in 1850, Gallier Hall plays a prominent role in New Orleans history. It experienced catastrophic stone failure in 2014, and a team of architects and building conservation specialists studied the failure and provided a solution to address the problem, clean the façade, repair and refinish elaborate plaster soffits, and reset stones. The judges said, the project was admired for its sensitive technical virtuosity, caring attention to detail, and sterling civic outcome for citizens.

The Design Awards competition included 51 projects entered by architectural firms from across the state.

ABOUT AIA: Since 1857, the AIA has represented the professional interests of America's architects. As AIA members, nearly 88,000 licensed architects, emerging professionals, and allied partners express their commitment to excellence in design and livability in our nation's buildings and communities. Members adhere to a code of ethics and professional conduct to assure the client, the public, and colleagues of an AIA-member architect's dedication to the highest standards in professional practice. For more information, see <http://www.aiaa.com>.