

2010 BSA / AIA NY HOUSING DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM

Jurors' Comments

We had the opportunity this year to review 63 projects submitted by New England and New York architects and by architects elsewhere in the world who were eligible to submit projects built in New England and New York.

The majority of this year's submissions were new, high-end, single-family residential projects located along the East Coast, Boston and Cape Cod in particular, or in the Caribbean. Many of these projects, it appeared, were second homes for private clients. Only a small percentage of the work reflected renovations, and therefore, the adaptive work stood out. We also reviewed fewer multi-family housing, academic, and public housing projects than expected. A few affordable housing solutions were among the submissions, though we noted that the sq., ft. cost to build many of these projects fell within market rate, suggesting a direct link between the idea of affordability and subsidization. We wished more projects were made affordable as the result of bold design intervention that resulted in livable and beautiful dwellings that were inexpensively built.

While a variety of aesthetic styles were represented, most of the submissions were contemporary, calling for flat or single-sloped roofs and interiors with open plans. Thoroughly explored and consistently well executed among the higher-end projects was the blurring between indoor and outdoor living, made possible chiefly by the incorporation of monumental sliding doors that let in daylight and views. We also noted several designs that called for an especially appealing use of stone and wood. While much can be built with a large budget, we found a few examples of truly sublime high-end design, where the value seemed to merit the cost.

All of the submissions reflected careful, credible design, though little of what we saw extended the boundaries of our expectations. Similarly, we found several projects that featured strong sustainable components, though few could boast a fully integrated sustainability platform. We observed that many of these projects were initiated more than five years ago, at the advent of the social sea change that moved our profession toward the tacit codification of environmentally responsible methods and practices. Jurors following after us will no doubt see the results of this change and may interpret the efforts of designers based on standards relevant to them.

We would be remiss to not briefly comment on the presentations themselves. In general, we ask submitters to remember that we may be reviewing scores of presentations during a single day. We must scan introductory information for details that can anchor and contextualize the overall narrative. The narrative arc is achieved by combining succinct language, ample diagrams to illustrate design intention, scaled plan drawings and plenty

of photographs to show how the concepts were carried out. Also, because people live inside of houses, we strongly encourage the inclusion of interior drawings and photographs, rather than focus exclusively on the building's exterior. No matter how inviting a facade, the real story about a structure's value as housing can only be told from the inside, where its inhabitants live.

At the end of the afternoon, our focus turned to 10 projects, every one an example of beautiful design. But more, each of the selected projects touched us emotionally, challenged our senses, and inspired our imaginations. We honored projects that made us want to dwell there.

We were drawn to projects that were clearly articulated from initial concepts through built volumes. We applauded multi-occupant design that provided opportunities for intimate, private living as well as community engagement. We loved adaptive reuse projects, strongly believing that sustainability starts by choosing to renovate instead of tearing down. And we were drawn by attention to detail, whether evidenced by materials choice; the sensuous cut of a curve; or the discreet moment when a building meets the street. When designers infused their projects with equal parts intelligence, confidence, daring-do, and love, we noticed.

As always, serving as jurors is an education and it was indeed that for us this year. We wish to express our appreciation to the Boston Society of Architects and to the AIA New York Chapter for this opportunity and we encourage all architects to continue to share your housing design efforts through programs such as this.

The Jurors

Alfred Wojciechowski AIA, jury chair (CBT Architects, Boston)

Robin Brown (CWB Boylston, Boston)

Lisa Huang AIA (Office dA, Boston, New York City, and Ann Arbor, MI)

Derek Johnson (Machado-Silvetti, Boston and Buenos Aires)

HONOR AWARDS FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE

The Residences at Franklin School (Medford MA)
for The Equity Company (Malden MA)
designed by Abacus Architects + Planners (Boston)...The Metric Corporation
(contractor, Boston); Souza, True & Partners (structural engineer, Watertown MA);
Robert W. Sullivan Engineering (MEP engineer, Boston); THEREdesign (interiors
consultant, Boston, MA); Eric Roth Photography (photographer, Topsfield MA)

This large-scale renovation of a 100-year-old school house retains the building's historic exterior while beautifully expressing the contemporary nature of the residential dwellings within; the spare intervention is both clear and legible...New dormer windows wrap the corners, dissolving the walls separating inside from out, adding considerably to the handsome structure without tampering with its original character...There is evidence of great sensitivity throughout the overall plan, with special attention given to the building's place in the community...Even the hallways are considered, indicating the designer's top-of-mind awareness about the way that people actually live in multi-housing buildings...The units appear quite livable, and there was lots of TLC lavished throughout the interior...We'd like to encourage this type of respectful intervention, which was also built with a very good cost per sq. ft.

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Small House (Great Barrington MA)
designed Maryann Thompson Architects (Cambridge MA)... The Small Building
Company (builder, Great Barrington MA); Okerstrom-Lang (landscape designer and
photographer, Great Barrington MA); Gennari Plumbing and Heating (plumbing and
heating, Great Barrington MA); Douglas Blume Electric (electrical engineer, Sheffield
MA); ADW Concrete (floors, Spencertown NY); Form Function Concrete (counters,
Rowley MA); Sellew Painting (finishes, Monterey MA); Nathan Eikelberg
(photographer, Exeter NH)

Sited on a 10-acre sliver of land that runs down a mountain slope, this 750 sq. ft. single-family residence is a warm, modest, cleverly designed structure that brings all the features of a larger home into a very small space...Conceptualized as a single volume, the interior can be completely open or compartmentalized for sleeping and privacy...The screened porch is separated from the interior by large double French doors that seamlessly connect the living space with the landscape...Dappled light is brought in from above, invited by clerestories on the west and full-height doors and windows on the east...The ultimate "log cabin," this creatively rendered building proves forever that 'small' really can be beautiful and desirable.

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New Single Family Residence (Lincoln MA)

for art collector and arts activist

designed by Andrew Cohen Architects (Wayland MA)...Merz Construction (contractor, Carlisle MA); C|2 Studio (landscape designer, Boston); Richmond So and Associates (structural engineer, Watertown MA); Allied Consulting Engineering Services (ME and fire protection engineer, Sudbury MA); BSC Group (civil and site engineer, Boston)

Built on the site of a former Christmas tree farm, this new house sets back from the road and integrates well with the rustic character of the land...Compelling and gorgeous, even the exterior spaces feel 'interiorized'...The interiors are rich but not opulent or overwrought, making sensitive use of finishes, including bamboo flooring; wool carpeting; locally-sourced maple millwork; glass railings; and FSC-certified harvested hardwood stairs and wall panels...The program called for ample interior gathering space suitable for holding fund raising and performing events, as well as private areas dedicated to the intimate art of living...Some of us wished we had been shown a through-section, and we wondered for a moment whether there was simply too much going on. But ultimately we agreed that this was one of the most ambitious and remarkable houses that we saw during our day together, and we loved it.

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45 Sheridan Street (Cambridge MA)

for Julian Bonder and Marcela Kalina-Bonder

designed by Julian Bonder + Associates (Cambridge MA) with Wiederspahn Architecture, LLC (associated architect, Somerville MA)...Hughes Construction (contractor, Watertown MA); Richmond So Engineers (structural engineer, Watertown MA); Bulger Mechanical (plumbing, Canton MA); Safeway Electric (electrical engineer, Needham MA); F.A.I. Mechanical Contractors (heating and cooling, East Douglas MA); Fittings, Inc. (kitchen design, Boston); Yale Appliances (appliances, Boston); JB Sash and Door Company (windows, Chelsea MA); Rheinzink (zinc roof fabrication and installation, Woburn MA)

Employing a great economy of means, the designer brought a remarkable transformation to a traditional New England Saltbox house, nearly doubling the original sq. ft. while paying great respect to the original dwelling...Based on the asymmetrical rooflines and patterns of the existing wood frame structure, the plan retains the building's front and two sides, while in the back, the volume grew significantly toward the garden, upwards, and to the best open views...Bleached white cedar siding provides a rain screen system that will age naturally, and all the systems in the house are updated to provide more efficient, modern heating and cooling...A terrific sense of place is conveyed by this single family residence and studio, and we agreed that the house feels warm and inviting...A bold and vigorous project, sited on a corner with high community visibility, the building feels contextually appropriate, visually interesting, and very livable.

Artreehouse (New Fairfield CT)
designed by Della Valle Bernheimer (Brooklyn NY)...Hammersmith, Inc. (contractor, Sharon CT); Guy Nordenson and Associates (structural engineer, New York City); Richard Barnes (photographer, Montclair NJ)

The initial concepts for this private residence are remarkably well-executed, resulting in a house that actually does appear to float and diffuse light, much like the surrounding tree canopies upon which it was modeled...The plan called for a complex structural system of wood joists and steel trusses, working together to lift the cantilevered volumes that are clad in red cedar, giving the house the appearance of having been built as a series of stacked pieces, like the rings of a tree...We admired the level of attention paid to details throughout the plan, including its name, and the intelligent choices of materials, though we wondered whether some of the dark wood selected for the interiors might bring a modern but somber Victorian attitude into play...The light filtering through the joists is beautiful, and the monumental glass that wraps the ground floor erases the distinction between indoor and outdoor living...Sited by a lake, this is a very beautiful place, and we loved it.

AWARDS FOR DESIGN

White Elephant Hotel Resources (Nantucket MA)

for Nantucket Island Resorts

designed by Arrowstreet (Somerville MA)...Stateside Construction Group (construction manager, Westborough MA); Alexandra Champalimaud Associates (interior designer, New York City); Harry R. Feldman, Inc. (surveyor, Boston); ENSR Consulting Engineering and Remediation (environmental and wetlands engineer, Sagamore Beach MA) Sanborn, Head & Associates (geotechnical and environmental engineer, Westford MA); Arthur Towne and RJ O'Connell & Associates (civil engineers, South Hamilton and Stoneham MA); Vanasse & Associates (traffic, Andover MA); Aberjona Engineering (structural engineer for new buildings, Winchester MA); DM Berg Consultants (structural engineer for main buildings, Needham MA); Shadley Associates (landscape designer, Lexington MA); John Van Stone Fogg (specifications, Whitinsville MA); Acentech (acoustical engineer, Cambridge MA); Wilkinson Associates, Inc. (MEP engineer, Warwick RI)

This phase-one luxury hotel and condominium development on historic Nantucket Island comprises two renovated structures and four new buildings; it maintains regional authenticity without its vitality being crushed by regulation...The traditional architectural style and village-like setting honors the community's past while the intimate scale and beautifully executed details combine to create tasteful, well-handled public and private spaces suitable for contemporary living...Special sensitivity is evident in the landscaping;

the spaces between the buildings feel gracious, meandering, and deliberate... We were pleased to discover that the development is anticipating LEED certification, a standard that is often difficult for hotels and other hospitality venues to accomplish given utility and water consumption rates... The project's layers of excellence indicate a designer who can masterfully conduct and execute every movement within the plan, from maximizing site orientation; to creating a luxurious public/outdoor realm; to spare, well-integrated, light-filled interiors; to the intelligent incorporation of environmentally sensitive systems and materials... These are very inviting spaces, and we would be delighted to vacation there.

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Traill Street Garden House (Cambridge MA)
designed by Maryann Thompson Architects (Cambridge MA)... Hughes Construction
(contractor, Watertown MA)

This single-family residence is a renovation that very cleverly transforms an existing structure into a luxurious, contemporary urban dwelling while retaining its external connection to the traditional New England neighborhood... Gracefully executed with minimal moves, the interior is warmed by daylight that floods in from new south-facing windows... The design incorporates several thoughtful and sustainable elements, including the introduction of more natural light; the installation of modern, high-performance windows and insulation; the reuse of existing materials, when possible; and of course, the very choice to renovate and adapt an existing structure, rather than tearing it down... This is a lovely, light, inviting space.

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Blue Rock House (Austerlitz NY)
for Andrew and Ruth Suzman
designed and photographed by Anmahian Winton Architects (Cambridge MA)... Lou Boxer Builder (contractor, West Stockbridge MA); Suzman and Cole Design Associates (landscape designer, San Francisco CA); Richmond So Engineering (structural engineer, Watertown MA); Allied Consulting Engineers (HVAC engineer, Sudbury MA); Berkshire Bridge and Iron Co. (steel, Dalton MA); Gary Albert & Son (masonry, Lanesboro MA); Montgomery Design Group (interior designer, Greenwich CT)

A main house, a guest house, and a garage form a community of buildings that engage dramatic views of the Catskill and Berkshire mountains... The platonic, archetypal volumes are organized in a way that creates delicate and muscular interaction; the forms are solid with heroic cantilevers that interact to achieve sculptural quality... Gorgeous, simple, and understated, the volumes appear to float... The well-articulated design includes sustainable strategies and technologies such as geothermal heating and cooling, with wind turbines slated for future installation to offset electricity consumption... We hope that the landscaping, currently a little rough, continues to evolve, but we agreed that we'd like to be guests here.

CITATION FOR PROVOCATIVE DESIGN

40 Bond (New York City)

for Ian Schrager Company

designed by Herzog & de Meuron (Basel Switzerland) with Handel Architects (architect of record, New York City)...Bovis Lend Lease (construction manager, New York City); DeSimone Consulting Engineers (structural engineer, New York City); ADS Engineers (MEP engineer, New York City); Langan Engineering and Environmental Services (geotechnical engineer, New York City); Construction Consulting Associates (codes, New York City); Friedman and Gotbaum (zoning, New York City); Dewhurst McFarlane and Partners (façade engineer, New York City); Israel Berger & Associates (facades, New York City); Shen Milsom & Wilke (acoustical engineer, New York City); Johnson Light Studio (lighting, New York City); Lerch Bates & Associates (vertical transport, Maplewood NJ); EXYD (computer programmer, Munich, Germany); Third Rail Ops (form fabricator, Beacon NY); Polich Tallix (foundry, Rock Tavern NY)

Located in an historic residential neighborhood rich with a series of unique cast iron facades, this multi-family residential development presents an intriguing urban response to its environment... Its skin is composed of wrapped glass and blackened copper, and a series of prominent, voluptuously rendered cast iron gates meant to resemble graffiti are central to the overall attempt to integrate art with architecture...We admire the innovative choice of materials; the elegantly executed interior/exterior spaces and curves... Particularly well-done is the harmonious meeting of the strictly residential building and the street, a relationship that can be uneasy without the introduction of a retail presence at the ground...In the end, the design confused us in ways that we could not resolve, though our conversation returned to it again and again...We suspect that the designer intended to challenge us and applaud the dash and confidence required to attain such grand success on that specific level.

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CITATION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN

Urban Living XXL (Boston)

designed by Ruhl Walker Architects (Boston)...Sleeping Dog Properties (general contractors, Boston); Arclinea Boston (kitchen design, Boston); Meichi Peng Design Studio (furniture and accessories, Boston); John Horner Photography (photographer, Boston)

A very contemporary, urban interior design that sets a high standard for desirable loft living...The private residence is permeated by an essence of transparency, evoked in part by an intelligent use of mesh screens and slatted doors that lead to more intimate spaces; this essence is enhanced by the structural openness introduced by great, 18 foot ceilings, and careful attention paid to the overall distribution of light...This dwelling makes good use of previously undeveloped industrial space, and at least one of us found it nothing short of sexy.