MID-CENTURY MODERNISM
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Everyday Modernism
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Photograph: ©ESTO/Jeff Goldberg

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EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS OF FIT AND FINISH

– Oz Whitesell, MKJ Creative

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I hate the term “Mid-century Modernism.” When was mid century? What is modernism? It’s hard to answer those questions, but that difficulty is, in fact, one of the defining characteristics of the fascinating architecture that we explore in this issue of Context. Nowhere is the complicated, hard-to-categorize richness of mid-century architecture more apparent than here in Philadelphia. We’re the home town of the “Philadelphia School,” which Jan Rowan christened and defined (loosely) in a famous article in Progressive Architecture in 1961.1 The Philadelphia School is arguably the quintessential architectural expression of the period, and, fittingly, it’s hard to define.

“Complex and contradictory” is one way you could describe the architecture built here in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. And, indeed, this year is the fiftieth anniversary of Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, the epochal book written by Robert Venturi, one of Rowan’s Philadelphia Schoolmates, and published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1966. In his “gentle manifesto,” Venturi suggested looking carefully at all sorts of architecture from the past, and then famously ended by declaring that the ordinary architecture of Main Street and of the commercial strip was “almost all right.” Subsequently, when anyone has tried to blame him for inventing Post Modernism, he concedes that “the modern movement was almost all right,” too.

What was created during the mid-century years in Philadelphia seems to live up to Venturi’s embracing, tolerant vision. But is it more than just complex and contradictory? What thread can possibly tie together all the inventive architecture that was built in Philadelphia during that era? What connects the comfortable domesticity of the Mother’s House, the romantic San Gimignano allusions of Louis Kahn’s Richards Building, the boney power of Romaldo Giurgola’s Walnut Street Garage, and the slick pizazz of the everyday commercial strip? Those buildings don’t look alike, which is how we normally define architectural styles and epochs. But if you close your eyes for a moment, you can see that, at a time when modern architecture seemed to have stalled and become formulaic, Philadelphia’s architects shared the vision of making it less artificial and more real. They did not agree about how to do it, however. Those who were working with the everyday reality of the suburb and the commercial strip undid some of modernism’s remoteness and abstraction to create a new vernacular architecture. Kahn reattached architecture to history and rooted his designs in the realities of particular traditions, functions, and materials. Giurgola reinvigorated form making with ardent geometry and structural expression. And Venturi and Scott Brown tapped into the “languages” with which ordinary people communicate in architecture.

This creative diversity makes Philadelphia’s mid-century architecture a little hard to define, and that may be the reason that we have been slow to appreciate and protect its landmarks. But understanding and appreciation are now growing, as the following articles make plain.

David Brownlee teaches architectural history at the University of Pennsylvania

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Dear Friends, Members and Colleagues,

This issue of CONTeXT showcases some of the best design coming out of the AIA Philadelphia Chapter by highlighting the winners of the 2015 Design Awards. It is our tribute to the design excellence of the Philadelphia architectural community. We hope that the changes to the event format helped to foster an environment that honors the winners, but also creates a social and collegial atmosphere for our entire architecture and design community. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the changes to the event, but we welcome any feedback that can help us improve the celebration.

Celebrating the impact that our members and colleagues are making on the greater Philadelphia area is a priority for AIA Philadelphia. So this year, we would like to start a new campaign using our Instagram account to highlight one member project a day in 2016. But we need your help to make this happen! In order to highlight projects, we need to know about them. Please send your firm’s project photo, name of project, name of architect, and photo credit to Sharon Leshner at sharon@aiaphila.org as often as you desire.

We are less than six months (gulp) away from the AIA National Convention in Philadelphia and our convention committees have been working tirelessly to make the 2016 Convention the best ever. The exciting announcement that Denise Scott Brown, Hon. FAIA and Robert Venturi, FAIA will accept the AIA Gold Medal in their hometown is something we can all be proud to share. Not only is it the first time that a pair of architects are being recognized, it is the first time a living woman will accept the award. Congratulations Denise and Bob!

During the Convention, the Center for Architecture will be the meeting spot with free coffee every morning and happy hours every evening. We will be stocked with lounge furniture, WiFi, and a new exhibit on the historical and current impact of Philadelphia architects worldwide. Tell your friends and colleagues to meet you at the Center during Convention.

Lastly, just in time for AIA Convention 2016, the Center for Architecture will be renovated to make room for a dedicated exhibit gallery, improved acoustics, lighting, and a new entryway that will help the flow of traffic into the Center. The Center will be under construction from January 8, 2016 through March 31, 2016, and meetings and rentals will not be possible during this time. The renovation will improve user experience at the Center and increase the size of groups that can rent the facility, a critical source of revenue that supports programming and allows the Center to fulfill its mission of celebrating architecture and design and being a champion for the built environment.

Lastly, 2016 will be the 10th year for the Edmund N. Bacon Award and on behalf of the Center for Architecture and AIA Philadelphia Boards, I would like to thank the Bacon family, Greg Heller, past and present members of the Edmund N. Bacon Memorial Committee, and all of the wonderful award honorees, students, and jurors who have helped sustain and grow the program over the past 10 years. We are very excited that Jan Gehl has accepted the invitation to receive the 10th Annual Edmund N. Bacon Award and we hope you can join us in late February (dates and location to be determined).

Here’s to a prosperous and exciting 2016!

Happy Holidays.

On January 14, 2016 AIA Philadelphia members are invited to celebrate the induction of the newly elected Board of Directors and Officers. Held at The Athenaeum, 219 South 6th Street, Philadelphia, the program includes the presentation of the Thomas U. Walter Award which honors a chapter member for his/her contributions to the architectural community through service to the American Institute of Architects and its initiatives.

On the Rise

Join us this Spring for our annual exhibition celebrating the winners of the Philadelphia Emerging Architect (PEA) Prize, awarded to an emerging Philadelphia architecture firm producing innovative design strategies, and the Young Architect Prize, awarded to one or more registered architect members of AIA Philadelphia between the ages of 25 and 39.

This year’s exhibition will feature a retrospective of past PEA Prize winners and the 2015 Young Architect honoree, Fon Wang, AIA. Over the course of her 17-year career, Fon has led projects ranging from state-of-the-art academic facilities to the restoration of a late 19th century station house.
2015 marks the 10th anniversary of The Better Philadelphia Challenge, an annual international design competition, founded in memory Philadelphia’s iconic city planner Edmund N. Bacon, to challenge university-level students to address real-world urban design issues in Philadelphia. To celebrate the milestone, the competition was extended to professional entrants and will offer two $5,000 prizes, one for the top student submission and one for the top professional submission.

The 2015 challenge asks entrants to design a healthy and active greater Belmont/Mantua neighborhood. Entries include physical design interventions that address health and activity, at both the grand vision and the small scale.

An awards ceremony will be held in February to honor the winners, and will also feature a talk by the 2016 Edmund N. Bacon Prize winner.

The Center for Architecture is pleased to announce Jan Gehl as this year’s Edmund N. Bacon Memorial Award honoree. Mr. Gehl is an architect and founding partner of Gehl Architects. A former professor and researcher, he has published several books, including “New City Spaces,” “Public Spaces – Public Life,” and most recently “How to Study Public Life.”

The Edmund N. Bacon Memorial Award + Talk honors one outstanding national or international figure who has advocated for excellence in urban development, planning, thought, and design through conviction of vision, effective communication, and a commitment to improving their community. This talk is presented along with the awards for the Better Philadelphia Challenge which takes place annually in February.

Congratulations Paul Drzal, AIA, NCARB, Winner of the “Kahn Coffee” Design Competition. As part of this year’s DesignPhiladelphia Festival, CFA hosted the “Kahn Coffee” Design Competition. Launched through a partnership between the Philadelphia Center for Architecture and Philly Fair Trade Roasters, the contest was a branding exercise to design packaging for a new blend of coffee available for purchase at the AIA Bookstore. Entries were on display for voting during the 2015 DesignPhiladelphia Festival.

Winning the public voting was the design of a Philadelphia-based architect and photographer, Paul Drzal, AIA, NCARB. Mr. Drzal graduated from Philadelphia University’s NAAB accredited Bachelor of Architecture program in 2002 and is currently managing his own practice working with developers and private clients in and around the Philadelphia area.
Infill Philadelphia: Play Space explores the unexpected ways that innovative play space helps both children and communities grow. Play Space is a partnership between the Community Design Collaborative and the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC) to explore the design of innovative outdoor play spaces and how they can improve the quality of child care and early childhood education. Play Space is made possible through a grant from The William Penn Foundation. The initiative is bringing play space’s many stakeholders together through events and programs, including a design charrette and design competition.

The Play Space Design Competition is challenging designers to team up with educators, parents, and others to create inspiring, innovative designs for outdoor play spaces in Philadelphia. This international, interdisciplinary design competition will inspire new ideas for how to transform three real-life sites—a public library, a recreation center, and a school—into fun, engaging, and intergenerational play spaces that support early childhood development and learning.

Join the Community Design Collaborative and the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at the Academy of Natural Sciences for fast-paced presentations by nine finalists and $10,000 prizes for the three winners of this juried design competition. http://cdesignc.org/playspace/competition

The Child’s Play Design Charrette laid the groundwork for a toolkit to help family child care providers tap into grants from A Running Start Philadelphia: Facility Fund and Rain Check to bring nature-based play to their side and back yards. The design charrette was part of Design on the Delaware, AIA Philadelphia’s annual professional development conference.

Nature-based play offers children rich, open-ended, and multisensory experiences playing with nature. One of its hallmarks is “loose parts” like tree stumps, sticks, nuts, and pine cones that let kids build and improvise.

Family child care providers in Philadelphia typically have limited outdoor spaces to offer their children. Charrette participants—designers, early child care educators, family child care providers, environmentalists, and others—collaborated on designs for eight prototypical Philly yards to show how simple, small-scale natural elements like grasses, shrubs, birdhouses, a sand pit, or a ring of tree stumps can bring nature-based play to Philly’s back and side yards.

SALT Design Studio will turn the ideas and sketches from the October 30 design charrette into a toolkit for use by family child providers and their funders.
In 1999, the American Institute of Architecture, Philadelphia Chapter had a vision for a new kind of high school – a tuition-free learning environment to introduce inner city kids to the process of design problem solving. Not only would there be design classes for ninth through twelfth grades, but perhaps more importantly, the core curriculum – math, science, English and social studies – would be interdisciplinary and involve design thinking. CHAD, the Charter High School for Architecture and Design, was born as the first public school of its kind in the United States, founded as the legacy project for the 1999 National AIA Convention in Philadelphia. The original goal was to train a new generation of designers, while diversifying the professions of fashion, architecture, industrial and graphic design.

Forward 16 years. CHAD’s student body is 99% racial minorities. When a new batch of 9th graders walk into school each Fall, well over 90% are reading and doing math below grade level. Moreover, most students have had no previous design or art experiences, and they don’t present a portfolio of any sort. Since this is a public high school, incoming kids are selected blindly through a lottery system.

However, by the time graduation rolls around four years later, 80% of our seniors are ready to go on to two or four year colleges. “CHAD’s design curriculum serves creative, visual learners who understand best by doing and seeing,” says Andrew Phillips, chair of CHAD’s design faculty. “Constant exposure to the design professions expands student horizons and broadens their understanding of career opportunities.”

CHAD is thriving beyond all expectations! Since its inception, CHAD’s vision of design education has expanded multi-fold. Our attrition, graduation and college acceptance numbers are well beyond the general Philadelphia public schools markers. Though not every student who leaves the school goes on for design or architecture degrees, that’s not the overarching goal of a CHAD education today. “The beauty of CHAD,” says Gregory Wright, CEO, “is that we shatter the myth that design and architecture are for the privileged few. Whether or not our kids actually become designers doesn’t really matter. What is important is that they gain the ability to problem solve by bringing disparate ideas together. It’s a holistic approach to educating young minds.”

As we look forward to the 2016 National AIA Convention in May, CHAD once again figures into Philadelphia’s AIA legacy project. “We are well into the planning of a project that will broaden the impact of design education not only for our students, but also for college students and industry professionals. We are looking to create a unique professional learning community anchored at CHAD, but one that will reach well beyond our boundaries.”

Additionally, Conference attendees will have access to CHAD’s hallways, classrooms, curriculum, students, teachers, administration, school governance, and culture. Enjoy tours that offer an insider’s view: Constructing K-12 Design Curriculum: Design at CHAD and Sweet 16: CHAD is Sixteen Years Old!

In 1999, the founders of CHAD set out to realize a deeply meaningful vision of what public education can be for future generations, an education that deepens the understanding of the power that design has to affect everyday life.

Sixteen years later, prepare to be wowed! by what you experience here at CHAD. Faculty, administration and parents, even college admission officers are wowed by our kids on a regular basis. See for yourself in May. We look forward to hosting you.
Romaldo Giurgola, FAIA, who has recently turned 95 and has lived in Australia for the last 33 years, was a key figure in the story of Philadelphia’s mid-century architecture. His notable buildings include the Penn Mutual Insurance Company on Independence Square, the United Fund headquarters on the Parkway, the (now demolished) Liberty Bell Pavilion on Independence Mall, and the Parliament House in Canberra, Australia.

A graduate of the Sapienza University of Rome and Columbia, he came to Philadelphia in 1954 to teach at Penn, where, together with the older Louis Kahn and younger Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, he helped to establish what Jan Rowan would call the “Philadelphia School.” But while it was widely recognized that ideas from Philadelphia helped to transform the practice of modern architecture in the 1950s-1970s, these Philadelphians shared only a few general philosophical principles and a handful of stylistic mannerisms.

Daniel Kelley, FAIA, came to work with Mitchell/Giurgola in 1980 and is the senior principal at MGA Partners, one of several successor firms. In a wide-ranging interview with David Brownlee in September, he discussed the work of Aldo Giurgola and helped to map the currents of architectural thinking and practice in Philadelphia at that time.

DB: When did you first hear of Giurgola, and what did you hear?

DK: By 1973, while I was studying at Georgia Tech, I was aware of Kahn’s and Giurgola’s works. From the designs I saw published, it seemed that these men were saying something different about contemporary architecture that was outside of doctrinaire modernism. I imagined that there might be a new relevance, perhaps something more essential, about the work being done in Philadelphia instead of New York or elsewhere.

DB: I know you continued your education with an MArch at Harvard, and in 1980 you came to Philadelphia to join your wife, who was studying at the Wharton School. Kahn had died in 1974, leaving Venturi/Scott Brown and Mitchell/Giurgola at the head of your list of top-tier architects. How did you choose?

DK: I was a young man who liked to make things, and I had the impression that the Mitchell/Giurgola firm, while having thoughtful and artistic intentions for everything they touched, emphasized architecture as their medium. I was more attracted to that than to the Venturi firm, where I was less likely to appreciate the narratives that accompanied their work. It was thrilling to interview at Mitchell/Giurgola on the 26th floor of PSFS — and I immediately saw them as a cohesive studio that produced sophisticated designs with an integrity that I admired.
DB: As interested as you were in the alternative spirit of Philadelphia architects, Harvard must have imprinted you with a foundational dose of modernism.

DK: Yes, Harvard was thoroughly influenced by Corbusier under the former leadership of Josep-Luis Sert, so plastic formalism was still powerful and contextualism was not. The ritual act of most incoming students was to spend $125 on the seven-volume set of Corbusier’s oeuvre (and I still have mine).

DB: So, in Giurgola's office did you find some of that Le Corbusian form making?

DK: Perhaps, but the work wasn’t referential to an aesthetic of form. Instead, it derived from universal ideas of space, context, usefulnes, and the elements of architecture informed by discovery. I saw in one person an urbane, rather gentle man whose combination of thoughtfulness, intellectualism, and artistic hand could fluidly guide the work. For me, Giurgola was a wonderful role model.

DB: And what did you make of the growing Postmodernist movement, which could be seen as splitting apart the Philadelphia School?

DK: By and large, we were not compelled towards stylist like that, since Aldo’s principles were strong and the form-making so confident. There was a healthy competition with the Venturi firm at that time (even on the softball field) and we were aware of their successess. However, I recall that we first recognized the real force of Postmodernism in 1981 when Michael Graves won the Portland city hall commission, in a design competition in which we were finalists.

DB: What did these very diverse Philadelphians have in common, and how would you define the differences among Kahn, Venturi/Scott Brown and Giurgola?

DK: What still excites me is that these three constructively challenged the sureness of extended modernism – that of Breuer, SOM, maybe Saarinen – and perhaps even challenged the essentials of Corbusier and Mies, to find a richer, deeper modernism that was connected to other aspects of the human experience besides aestheticism or reductionism.

It seems to me that Kahn, Venturi/Scott Brown, and Giurgola accomplished this in different ways. Kahn did it with poetry of place, the presence of materiality as well as an assimilation of classical history and antiquity. Venturi and Scott Brown connected to the emerging power of popular culture and the changes that artists were making in music, two-dimensional art, and advertising. Giurgola was consistently interested in the comprehensiveness of place. This meant that his designs often acknowledged and celebrated that they were an episode in a larger order of urbanism or landscape and that their legitimacy lay in their ability to contribute to a cohesive human environment.

DB: You seem to be saying that Giurgola and Kahn were most alike among the Philadelphia School, especially in how both believed that one had to design architectural forms in a way that shaped and gave meaning to spaces.

DK: Yes. Here you have both Kahn and Giurgola saying “Look at the City and understand that the walls of the buildings are the walls of the streets, and the streets are the conduits of life.” They were saying that there is a complete synthesis between form and space, between interior and exterior, particularly in an urban condition.

DB: Giurgola, as you've said, was a formalist—perhaps more so than Kahn.

DK: I am a bit nervous about that word. Certainly, for Giurgola, the search for architecture had a very important formal component and, to see his drawings and designs is to see a great love of composition. I remember that Aldo would delight in studying building elevations. He
has broad powers with the language of architecture and he could be very inventive with them in creating form – beyond surface and imbedded in the concept to become a three-dimensional whole. Perhaps this is different from Kahn, where the architecture arose from convictions about space and light. However, what certainly unites the two is that aesthetic ambition or style was not the purpose of their architecture.

DB: Drawing played a large role in his form making, didn’t it?
DK: He is incredibly proficient in drawing, and this way of communicating his ideas was inspiring to all of us because it was very personal. At that time he drew mostly in pencil and his abilities were extensive – from diagrams, to studies, to the remarkable large renderings that were inevitably so compelling. Drawing is very natural to him and he never seems to labor. Almost like an athlete who doesn’t need to tell his legs to run, he relies on his hand to move independently, to seek shapes and patterns, to find proportion or balance. He visualizes form so well that he can sort ideas three-dimensionally with quick perspectives that lead to solutions about space or about surface. Of all his skill with drawing, it was his ability to synthesize it, in real time with us alongside, as an iterative exploration of design - that was most instructive to me.

DB: You’ve said that Giurgola sought to contextualize his buildings and humanize the spaces he made. Could you say more about the limits of his formalism?
DK: Yes, because I think to talk of Giurgola only from the perspective of his aesthetic skill is to miss his essential commitment to architecture. He believes that architecture is a vessel for life and the human experience – needing to be, in a word, inhabited. So, he saw as the architect’s primary role to create places that celebrate the possibilities of people and empower them. This quality of place was the starting point for the content of his work, for the design concepts and for the developed buildings including their craft. While he didn’t write prolifically, you will find that he consistently returns to this subject of place in attempting to define the architect’s role as well as his own aspiration.

It is difficult to explain the mystery of place and form. For me (and maybe Aldo would agree), it is J.B. Jackson’s proposition that a “sense of place” is embodied in a building with the rhythm of a community in a cyclical course of time and memory. I think that he wanted his work to achieve that.

DB: How, then, did Giurgola navigate between his passion for form and his commitments to humanity and architectural context?
DK: He considered them as a synthesis, not exclusive of each other – as if form had the ability to reconcile the dynamics of life. Instead of being rigid with ideology, he was able to accept different sources of origin for his designs. He discovered and distilled essential facets of the context and the program, then developed a concept and a formal language of architecture that resolved them.

DB: You have a small collection of images here. Can you talk about them?
DK: Aldo made many wonderful drawings – happily, they are together at the Kroiz Gallery and Architectural Archives at Penn. He started the process for each project with diagrams that represented simple relationships of movement, space, context, and order. Later, as a concept began to take shape, his diagrams would become more architectural in character.
DB: This diagram is of the Penn Mutual Building. What does it show?

DK: This is one of his finest early buildings. The diagram illustrates the several essential components that comprise the architecture – and it illustrates his interest in design as a collection of responses, rather than merely being one big idea. It shows the rich north façade that is derived from program and contextual conditions. It also shows the preserved Egyptian Revival façade designed by John Haviland on the north, as well as the east concrete screen that cleverly combines a sun shade, a vertical systems chase, and a structural frame for a free-spanned office space.

DB: You’ve told me that sometimes you take out some of Giurgola’s designs to check on how you’re doing, and that a favorite is the unbuilt project for the AIA headquarters in Washington.

DK: I bring this image out at least once a year and enjoy it. It is a photograph of the New York Avenue elevation of the firm’s winning entry in 1965 for the competition to build the new national AIA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. You might recall that the firm eventually resigned the commission after being asked by review agencies to make too many compromises in the design. Anyway, I am inspired by the façade because it is a glorious act of confidence and compositional power – and it asks me to find some measure of that character in my own work.

DB: As the lead designer at MGA, what you have learned from Giurgola?

DK: Above all, I would say that I learned a way to work – to make architecture that is a synthesis of ideas and artistic intent. Aldo showed me how to make the act of drawing part of the act of creation – and to have assurance in my power to do that in collaboration with others. Finally, his inventiveness with form, searching each time for the right response, is an affirmation for me of the joy of design.

Since we began MGA Partners in 1990 (we have just passed twenty-five years), we have assembled a significant portfolio of our own. I am certain that my partners and colleagues share my sentiment that we owe our legacy to Ehrmann Mitchell and Romaldo Giurgola, who found a remarkable firm in 1958 and taught us how to be architects.

DB: Any final thoughts?

DK: I would like to return to where we began our conversation, to the special power of Philadelphia as a place that has inspired a community of art, architecture and design for several centuries and given a context for our firm. I would also like to return to Philadelphia as a physical place, with its gracious plan, its earnest buildings expressing the craft of architecture, and its spaces measured by time – all a framework for achieving meaning in our work. The fact that these ideas are so beautifully accessible in Philadelphia binds our work inevitably to this place. Giurgola and the other men and women of the Philadelphia School conveyed this character to us in a burst of energy a half century ago, and that is why we remember them and honor their work.

Finally, I want to say again that Aldo is a natural maker of beautiful things. To be connected with such excellence is a magnificent pleasure. He is elderly now, so his correspondence is occasional. However, he has taken to ending his short letters with a benediction that I offer all architects as we conclude: “More power to you.”

Daniel Kelley is a partner in MGA Partners.
PHILADELPHIA’S EVERYDAY

George W. Neff, Stein’s Florists, 7059 Frankford Avenue 1950
MODERNISM

BY WILLIAM WHITAKER

Take a walk along Chestnut Street or a drive down City Avenue and you’ll find them. Even better, stand at the corner of Cottman and Castor in the Northeast for a panoramic view. There, and in countless other locations throughout the Philadelphia region, a remarkably vital architectural legacy can be discovered—conceived in the optimistic mid-twentieth century and responsive to the changes in modern life that were then reshaping the American landscape. But you probably won’t find them in books of architectural history.

Philadelphia has its share of exceptional buildings—ones that can be found in those history books. Louis Kahn’s Richards Laboratory and Robert Venturi’s Mother’s House are two iconic examples of the role that the city’s architects played in defining (and redefining) architecture internationally during the second half of the twentieth century. But focusing on those luminous examples and other works of the so-called “Philadelphia School” risks missing the vibrant, everyday modernism of the Philadelphia neighborhood: the corner store, the health center, and the filling station. Missing too is the modernism that shaped the burgeoning bedroom communities beyond the city line: from King of Prussia to Cherry Hill, Levittown to the Concord Pike in Wilmington, with all those highway interchanges, shopping centers, motels, and office parks in-between.

Venturing out into this world can be fascinating and sometimes it leads to the discovery of buildings that are significant nationally—but overlooked. City Avenue is an especially fruitful place to begin this exploration. Along the four miles of its so called “Golden Strip” are located an early, if not the first, purpose-built television station—WCAU (completed in 1952, George Howe and Robert Montgomery Brown, architects); a Lord & Taylor’s styled by the

William Tabler, Marriott Hotel City Line Avenue, Bala Cynwyd 1955 (demolished)
famous industrial designer, Raymond Loewy—one of six built by the New York based department store as it expanded into affluent east coast suburbs (completed in 1955); and a large—but now lost—Marriott Hotel, opened in 1955 (only the chain’s second hotel, William Tabler, architect).

The Marriott featured a swank Tiki bar next to its swimming pool and a Polynesian themed restaurant known as the Kona Kai, with an entrance flanked by a phalanx of flaming torches. One can imagine the first wave of baby-boomer families sitting down to an exotic meal at the Kona Kai as one stop on their pilgrimage to the city of brotherly love—an itinerary that also led them by car dealerships, service stations, fast food joints, and, when they got home, to the camera shop to develop their snap-shots and home movies.

Also of note along City Avenue are two modern hospitals (Philadelphia Psychiatric by Louis Kahn, 1954, and Lankenau by Vincent Kling, 1959); numerous private houses and apartment buildings (complete with cabana clubs), synagogues and churches, shopping centers, and branch banks, including the now lost Cayuga Federal Savings Bank (Martin and Ross, architects; built 1958). The prominent but now much altered regional headquarters building designed by Los Angeles based architect Welton Becket for Gulf Oil, overlooking the Schuylkill Expressway at the avenue’s eastern end, reminds us of not only Philadelphia’s central place in the petroleum industry during the period (also revealed in the vast refineries on the way to the airport) but also of the expanding influence of advertising and corporate branding at the time. Marketing was the impetus for the proliferation of filling stations, too, in which oil companies experimented with new concepts to attract customers.

While the City Line “Golden Strip” shows Philadelphia getting up to speed with the changes to the commercial and residential landscape that were happening across America, our hometown love affair with the automobile was perhaps best seen in the redoubtable trio of “Manny, Moe, and Jack.” The larger than life statues that
Juxtaposing these examples, which history has often erased, with the architecture that is celebrated encourages a deeper understanding of how Philadelphia architects responded to the challenges and opportunities of the twentieth century. These less celebrated buildings were, after all, far better integrated into the lived experience of most Philadelphians than their more famous counterparts. And although the purposes that many of these buildings once served have given way to “progress,” they demonstrate remarkable architectural ingenuity and provide lessons for today’s designers, who continue to add to the distinctive vitality and variety of Philadelphia’s modernism.

William Whitaker is curator and collections manager of the Kroiz Gallery and Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania.

Once surmounted the Pep Boy’s store on North Broad Street recall the monumental, allegorical sculptures of nineteenth century civic buildings. The comparison with City Hall’s iconic William Penn statue (located a short distance away and within sight), while amusing, is also indicative of the borrowing that is a central characteristic of commercial architecture. The line between high civic aspirations and the everyday banter of Main Street is wonderfully blurred.

These examples of everyday modernism in Philadelphia are every bit as interesting as those found, more expectedly, in the car-centered cities of the American West – however tempered ours might be by the local historic context and the realities of icy winters. In fact, our historic context makes the juxtapositions between new and old more complex and interesting.

But this is the Quaker City, and restraint and social concern are also expressed in this architecture, particularly in the city’s community health centers and branch libraries. The Philadelphia Senior Center at Broad and Pine (by Joe Jordan, with landscape architect Harriet Pattison, 1979) and District Health Center #1, across the way (by Montgomery & Bishop, architects, 1959), demand a second look, not only for their engaging architectural detail but especially because of this city’s long history of expressing medical achievement through art.
Chestnut Hill is known for the quality of its built environment: the careful interweaving of good design in both architecture and landscape within a relatively narrow range of scale and with a strong relationship to the shared, street context. The legacy of Chestnut Hill’s high design quality begins in the mid-nineteenth century and continues to the present, including some of Philadelphia’s most recognized buildings. The Margaret Esherick House by Louis I. Kahn and the Mother’s House (Vanna Venturi residence) by Robert Venturi are both justifiably world-renowned and local, Chestnut Hill landmarks.

They are rarely if ever, however, recognized as products and part of a specific regional, even local, context. In fact, they are not unique achievements in the design history of Chestnut Hill. There one can find important examples of the trends in local modernism that preceded the emergence of the famous “Philadelphia School,” and thereby trace the connections between the work of such well-known architects as Kahn and Venturi and that of their Philadelphia predecessors and contemporaries, including Oskar Stonorov, Montgomery and Bishop, and Kenneth Day.

In contrast to the recognition that has been afforded the Esherick and Venturi Houses for some time, the other modernist architecture of Chestnut Hill has received relatively little attention. The Chestnut Hill Historical Society began the important and substantial task of updating the 1985 National Register Nomination that created Chestnut Hill National Historic District in the fall of 2015. This update was made possible by funding from the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, and its main goals are to create greater recognition of the significance of a number of modernist buildings from the 1930s to the 1960s and to afford further protection to a select number of them through listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The Chestnut Hill National Historic District is one of the largest in the state, and includes nearly 3,000 properties. It comprises almost all of this portion of the city, stretching from Stenton Avenue at the city’s northeast limit into the Wissahickon Valley on the west, and from the Cresheim Creek on the south to Northwestern Avenue on the north. The original nomination of the district was a heroic undertaking by the early leaders of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society and historian Jefferson Moak. The “50-year rule” that generally keeps newer properties off the National Register of Historic Places by federal regulation dictated, however, that the modernist buildings constructed after 1935 could not be considered “contributing resources.” While the nomination’s text recognized their design worth, they had to be classified as “intrusions” in the accompanying inventory. The present project will change the status to “contributing” for a large number of these important buildings and thus list them in the National Register for the first time. Further information about their significance will be included in an addendum to the original document.

The modernist buildings of Chestnut Hill were woven into a richly varied, existing environment. This area remained relatively rural into the mid-nineteenth century, when the arrival of the first railway line (now SEPTA’s Chestnut Hill East) in 1854 began its transformation. Substantial country houses by notable Philadelphia designers such as Sidney and Merry and Samuel Sloan were constructed near the highest point of the hill along Summit Street and Chestnut Hill Avenue, taking advantage of the views to the north and cooler summer temperatures. Alongside this elite enclave grew a community of entrepreneurs and workers who provided goods and services. Another major wave of growth began in 1884 when a second rail line (now the Chestnut Hill West) was introduced and Henry H. Houston began substantial developments in the land west of Germantown Avenue. The firm of H. W. and W.D. Hewitt designed an inn (now part of Springside Chestnut Hill Academy), St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, double houses as rental properties, a number of larger, single residences for sale, and Houston’s own ...
Chestnut Hill Architecture of the Twentieth Century

Louis Kahn, Margaret Esherick House 1959-61
residence, Druim Moir, at the western end of Willow Grove Avenue adjacent to the Wissahickon Valley.

As part of his developments, Houston amassed a significant amount of farmland, but much of this remained undeveloped at his death in 1895. Houston’s successors, particularly his son Samuel and son-in-law George Woodward, took on the task of developing this land in the early twentieth century. Woodward’s work as a developer in the 1910s and ’20s is particularly notable, and forms a key context for the modernist buildings that would be built in Chestnut Hill beginning in the 1930s.

After initially employing architects Frank Miles Day and Wilson Eyre to design single residences for sale and double houses for rent, Woodward created a collaborative design studio arrangement with H. Louis Duhring, Edmund Gilchrist, and Robert R. McGoodwin. Together these architects created not just single residences, but also groups that responded sensitively and in complicated ways to their site, street, and landscape. While they are not generally recognized as modern because of their historicist motifs (generally French and English medieval), these Woodward houses embody some of the important and innovative planning principles of the period. Moreover, their often simple, abstracted, rectilinear, and prismatic geometry and their emphasis on the texture and color of materials, rather than applied ornament, prefigured the ideas of what became known as the International Style.

After the famous arrival of this explicit modernism in Philadelphia in the form of the PSFS building of 1929-1932 by George Howe and William Lescaze, European immigrants like Lescaze, including Oskar Stonorov, Albert Kastner, and Dominique Berninger, brought modernist vocabulary increasingly into the Philadelphia architectural conversation, and “home-grown” modernists, including Louis Kahn, began to establish their own careers. The 1930s were an important period of transition for architecture in Philadelphia, not only because of the economic effects of the Depression, but also because many who had previously practiced in historicist idioms began to adopt and adapt this new vocabulary.

In this decade, land in Chestnut Hill was still available in undeveloped Woodward and Houston holdings and on lots created by the subdivision of several large estates sold and broken up in response to the reversal of economic fortunes. Not surprisingly, yet significantly, the area’s earliest modernist houses embraced neither the Miesian ideal of pure, prismatic steel and glass volumes, nor the white stucco, sculpted massing of Le Corbusier’s work. Instead, in the pioneering modern Philadelphia houses of the 1930s, an arc of influence can easily be traced back to the progressive local designs of the 1920s. For example, the house that Kenneth Day (whose work was recognized in contemporary professional publications nationally) designed in 1938-39 for Charles Woodward is characterized by white, planar surfaces, but it eschews the flat roof line of the European modernists in favor of a more traditional, hipped form.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Chestnut Hill saw the construction of several clusters of modernist houses, designed by architects whose careers were just beginning as well as by established designers who were learning to adapt the new, modernist taste. The designs of this period register not only this shift, as seen, for example, in houses by William Pope Barney, who had worked with Kastner and Stonorov on the Carl Mackley Houses of 1933-34, but also the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and the arrival of the homebuilder developers of post-World War II subdivisions that were spreading across the nation’s landscape.

The first two clusters of modernist work were built on Lynnebrook Lane, a loop road near the intersection of Bethlehem Pike and Stenton Avenue that was laid out in a section of the former Bohlen estate, and on Waterman Avenue and Valley View Road, which were created in the former Waterman estate. On Lynnebrook Lane, Robert Bishop, a former student of Frank Lloyd Wright, worked with his partner John W. Wright to complete a house for Wilson White in 1947 that emphasizes projecting Wrightian roof forms and the use of local Wissahickon schist, which linked their work to earlier Chestnut Hill houses. Bishop’s Flee House of 1958-59, designed with his later partner Newcomb Montgomery, dramatically engages the natural terrain of Chestnut Hill in a variation on the topographical
conceit of Fallingwater. On the former Waterman estate, local developers Erney and Nolen constructed a series of fairly traditional, one-story, Colonial Revival dwellings typical of many houses of the period. But next to them on Valley View Road, John Nolen, Jr., the in-house architect for his father’s company, completed a more daring residence for himself in 1950-51, with a butterfly roof and recessed walkway entrance. Nolen, in his later partnership with Herbert Swinburne, completed several other nearby modernist houses, clad in tan brick.

The most significant modernist complex of the 1950s in Chestnut Hill is Cherokee Village, the work of Oskar Stonorov, and an exemplification of his ideas about “group housing.” This 104-unit garden apartment and townhouse project, with efficient apartment plans that function like Swiss watches, was built in two phases in 1950-1955. (The second portion is by the firm of Stonorov and Haws.) The client was Donald Dodge, a Houston relative, and the project was constructed on a former Houston family estate, carefully incorporating mature trees and other landscape features.

The design, which emphasized another traditional local building material, brick, was covered by gabled roofs. Robert Venturi worked in the Stonorov office during the project. In addition to its low-rise apartment buildings, the “Village” also included single houses on an adjacent street.

The 1960s brought a group of internationally important, Philadelphia-based designers, all key figures in the “Philadelphia School,” to Chestnut Hill, where they built three remarkable houses for single women clients. Robert Venturi’s design for his mother Vanna, built 1959-1962, sparked a world-wide architectural revolution, yet it sits comfortably in its Millman Street context, where its polemically “ordinary” gabled roof, prominent chimney, stuccoed exterior, and small scale relate to the form and materials of neighboring mid-nineteenth century dwellings, and also to the nearby 1920s Woodward development houses and Kenneth Day’s Charles Woodward House. The Margaret Esherick House, designed by Louis I. Kahn in 1959-61, is just down the street, and it, too, plays the role of a good neighbor, with tan stuccoed walls and a traditional emphasis on masonry mass and weight that was equally revolutionary when compared to modernism’s usual industrial materials and lightweight construction. The house that Dorothy Shipley White commissioned from Mitchell/Giurgola, completed in 1963 near the Chestnut Hill golf course, follows in the same vein in its stuccoed surfaces, but comes closest to the more conventional modernist vocabulary in its asymmetrically disposed, flat-roofed, rectilinear volumes.

Updating the Chestnut Hill Historic District cannot yet come closer to our own time than this astonishing triumvirate of the 1960s, because of the 50-year cut-off. It is notable, however, that Philadelphia architects continued to design important modern projects in Chestnut Hill, including Rafael Villamil, the late Mark Ueland, John Rauch, and others. More recent work by Lawrence McEwen, Runyan and Associates, and Elie-Antoine Atallah indicate that the tradition of good modern design continues to flourish in this section of the city.

Emily T. Cooperman is a historic preservation consultant who is now participating in the updating of the Chestnut Hill National Historic District nomination.
In 2012, the repair and stabilization of one of the majestic brick walls of Louis Kahn’s Richards Medical Research Laboratories Building was one of the many projects in the construction frenzy that characterizes summer at the University of Pennsylvania.

We were addressing serious bulges and visibly growing misalignments, at the root of which was the usual litany of afflictions of mid-century reinforced concrete: poorly placed reinforcing rods, twisted and rusted relieving angles, and, especially, inadequate and even absent expansion joints.

We had instructed the contractors to carefully remove and retain the bricks from the repair locations, and to chip off the mortar from each to allow their reuse. (Kahn’s specified bricks – Sayre and Fisher, shade #7672 – which he used throughout his career, are no longer available, and their color and size are difficult if not impossible to duplicate.)

All standard practice for us, although with particularly high stakes given the importance of the building.

Mid-project, I got an exasperated call from a wonderful colleague, one in a position of considerable academic and institutional authority, who asked, in essence: “Why bother? Wouldn’t it be cheaper and faster to use any brick you can get?” I should add that this caller, earlier in his distinguished career, had performed research in a Richards lab, and he had essentially zero affection or respect for it as a functional science building, let alone as a work of architecture.

I inhaled sharply.

And then I cautiously responded: One, we’d try to match the materials when repairing any building. Two, we were fortunate to have a small stash of replacement bricks, a perfect match salvaged from another building, which meant that the labor of chipping mortar would be far less than he might imagine. Three, Richards was, since 2009, a National Historic Landmark, a designation of supreme importance.

Okay, the caller said. I exhaled. The contractor continued to chip off mortar.

This anecdote captures the two major difficulties associated with the preservation, rehabilitation and reuse of mid-century modern buildings: daunting technical challenges, and – there’s no other way to say it – lack of sympathy, if not outright hostility.

I should be clear that, as an institution, despite undeniable and probably inevitable pockets of disaffection,
Penn has vigorously supported the official recognition and preservation of Richards. In 2007, I proposed to university leadership that we pursue designation of Richards (and the attached, slightly later Goddard Laboratories, also by Kahn) as a National Historic Landmark. In response to the completely expected and legitimate questions about the implications of designation, I was able to say that it would not impose on Penn anything beyond or different from how we would treat the building anyway, given our general commitment to stewardship, as buttressed by several layers of internal advisory review. This response was accepted. An eloquent and thorough NHL nomination was then prepared by Dr. Emily Cooperman, and it sailed through what can be a tortuous process, especially for a building that was not yet 50 years old.

Richards was officially designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior on January 16, 2009, joining the Fisher Fine Arts Library as Penn’s second NHL.

Official recognition of this monument, which had been celebrated when it was brand new by a rare, one-building exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1961, was followed by institutional commitment to a series of extremely challenging projects of restoration, rehabilitation and reuse. The first phase of this work at Richards was completed last summer.

The powerful foundation of our activity is a commitment to continuity of use – reusing this science building as a science building. Although the principle of continuing to use buildings for their designed purposes does not find its way explicitly into much of preservation policy, it certainly characterizes and enhances many beloved NHLs – including such local examples as City Hall, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Academy of Music.

At Richards, the most potent project decision – allowing its continued use for scientific research – was to convert it from a wet to a dry lab. This enabled us to remove the dense and intrusive tangle of mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems that had grown through the decades, eventually migrating below the horizontal distribution zone Kahn had so elegantly provided for them within the building’s Vierendeel trusses, those powerful and articulate bones of the building’s order. With this decision, what had become a very tight belt, constricting the building’s possibilities, was loosened by several notches.

In imposing order on the clutter of building systems, we have been fortunate to be able to take advantage of current technology – in particular, chilled beams, whose placement and detailing have been carefully coordinated with the new lighting. All protrusions of equipment have been prevented below the bottom face of the Vierendeels, protecting the integrity of what many on the project team came to refer to as “The Sacred Space.” Kahn’s initial order has thus been recaptured, and its visual coherence restored.

This cleaning out and clarifying of the building in section has been paired with a corresponding and equally resourceful effort to do so in plan. It is well known that Kahn imagined that each floor in the Richards Building’s three research towers would be an open workspace with almost no full height partitioning, to foster what he imagined to be the nature of successful scientific collaboration. Writers on Kahn have noted the parallel between his assumptions about the spaces for scientific research and his direct knowledge of the kinds of open studio space within which architectural design flourished. His assumptions about scientific work were quickly proved inaccurate, and full height partitions began to be installed almost immediately, compromising the design clarity he intended.

Like their predecessors, today’s tenants of the repurposed laboratories have been unable to accept Kahn’s vision of an entirely open plan. The rehabilitation project thus has had to develop a sympathetic way to insert full height partitioning, and the design process has been ferociously complex. The resulting vocabulary of the partitions is deceptively simple – wood and glass, deployed as required by the program in vertical panels and subject to clear design principles: the vertical panels must extend full height, be made of one material, and contain no horizontal subdivisions. In addition, on each floor in the three research towers, the central area and, more
importantly, one full corner, a quarter of each floor plate, is left open, laid out without full height partitions, with low work stations and shared work surfaces. This approach was only possible because of the changeover from wet to dry lab, and it has allowed the clarity of Kahn’s design to re-emerge, preserving shared views of the spectacular glazed corners while accommodating the legitimate need for private offices.

Developing this partitioning vocabulary has been a necessary component of the rehabilitation design. More challenging has been responding to the three-by-three, nine-square subdivision that the building’s truss layout imposes on each floor plan, a layout that seems to declare where full height partitions can be located. Alas, it has been necessary to ignore these mute instructions; laying out the partitions in perfect alignment with the grid of trusses would have resulted in too few and too large spaces to accommodate the programs moving into the building. We have had to devise a means to offset partitions from both the truss’ ceiling grid and the exterior windows.

An approach to managing the tops of those partitions that do not align with trusses was suggested by one tantalizing line, drawn in one detail, on one sheet of Kahn’s construction drawings. It shows a horizontal metal ceiling panel, and this inspired our solution to this alignment problem.

We could find not even such minimal guidance for detailing the locations where the new partitions have to meet the exterior window wall. Through multiple designs and mock-ups, we devised a partition that jogs in plan as it approaches the window. We have glazed these jogs from sill height to ceiling – the same height of glass as the original windows – and minimized their visual exterior impact by using non-reflective glass.

Discussing the design of this partition jog inevitably leads to consideration of the original windows, certainly one of Richards’ astounding glories, whether seen from inside or outside. They combine stupendous size (14’ x 5’-5”) with startling precision of placement – perfectly aligned in an unbroken single plane with the concrete and brick of each tower facade. They contribute to the clarity with which the building demonstrates how it was made, which is only possible because of the almost unbelievable slender proportions of Kahn’s custom fabricated stainless steel window frames.

Windows pose a vortex of challenges in the comprehensive rehabilitation of a mid-century building, because such projects inevitably target improved energy performance and, concomitantly, some level of third-party certification, particularly LEED. Penn has set ambitious targets for this, as set forth in our Climate Action Plan 2.0 (http://www.upenn.edu/sustainability/) and Engineering Guidelines (http://www.facilities.upenn.edu/standards-policies/standards/design-standards).

Better energy performance is also a key goal of Penn’s Century Bond, which is providing much of this project’s funding. Following Trustee approval in spring 2012, the University sold $300 million in bonds that have an interest-only annual payment, with payback of the principal due in one hundred years. Most of this huge loan is being used for comprehensive rehabilitation projects that combine deferred maintenance and increased energy efficiency. Because savings in energy costs will be applied to the interest payments, robust improvement in energy performance is essential. Richards is no exception.

Could such savings be made while preserving the appearance of the windows of Richards? Under no circumstances could we consider removing Kahn’s slender original frames. But could they accommodate glazing that would perform better than the original ¼” plate glass? Lengthy, detailed and complex technical and
aesthetic investigations determined that the frames were incapable of accepting insulated glass – even if it could have even been obtained at a scale and precision matching that of the original plate glass. However, the frames could accept 9/16” laminated glass, which energy modeling showed would, in concert with the new systems, significantly improve performance. Choosing from available glass, while evaluating such factors as planarity (especially), energy performance, tint and reflectivity, has proved to be complicated, prolonged and vexing, but the replacement glass, which has now been installed in the original frames, is glorious.

There is much to say about other technical challenges of this project: selecting wood species, cleaning concrete block, matching terrazzo, repairing and cleaning concrete. But instead I will close by returning to the less tangible issue, that of addressing the pockets of disaffection for the building. I have no precise way to measure the ups and downs of this attitude. But I can certainly say that, no one in the project team any longer sees what Penn is doing at Richards as a mere rehabilitation project. There has been a palpable and growing understanding of the meaning and legitimacy of the National Historic Landmark designation and its associated stewardship responsibilities. (A small but meaningful contribution to this evolving attitude was a lunchtime pizza conversation that David Brownlee and I had the pleasure of conducting with the construction personnel, telling them what a National Historic Landmark is, and why Richards is one.) But an even more powerful educational force – no surprise – is the building itself, which has a remarkable ability to convey, through some form of mute architectural sign language, how it needs to be treated – just what kinds of intervention and alteration are – and are not– appropriate. I sense that the entire team is now receiving those mute instructions and advice from the building, no matter what their attitude about it was when the project began.

And as the building is gradually freed from unsympathetic alterations, in a process that will continue for several years, I expect an ever larger circle of those who experience the Richards Building will begin to hear those messages. ■

David Hollenberg is the University Architect of the University of Pennsylvania.
The John Frederick Harbeson Award is presented annually to a long-standing member of the architectural community and is intended to recognize significant contributions to the architectural profession made over their lifetime.

Alan Greenberger, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Director of Commerce – With 34 years of private practice in planning and architecture, Alan Greenberger integrates long-range strategic planning with business and real estate development in his current role as Deputy Mayor. Under his leadership, Philadelphia has a new Zoning Code and a comprehensive plan to guide the city’s growth over the next two decades - “Philadelphia 2035”.

“Alan Greenberger is a true representation of the citizen architect, using his training for the betterment of our community,” says AIA Philadelphia president Jim Rowe. “His work on Philadelphia 2035 exemplifies his vision of how planning a healthier and more vibrant city can make a positive impact on the lives of Philadelphians.”

The Paul Philippe Cret Award recognizes individuals or organizations who are not architects but who have made an outstanding and lasting contribution to the design of buildings, structures, landscapes, and the public realm of Greater Philadelphia.

The Honorable Michael Nutter, Mayor of Philadelphia – Since Mayor Nutter took office in 2008, he has been committed to improving Philadelphia’s built environment, pledging to make Philadelphia the Number One Green City in America. With the support of the local architectural and building community, Mayor Nutter has had some notable successes. “From the Greenworks Philadelphia initiative to the redesign of Dilworth and Love Parks, and the redevelopment of Market East and North Broad, Mayor Nutter has fostered an environment that promotes the role of architecture in a thriving world class city”, said Jim Rowe, president of AIA Philadelphia.

The Young Architect Award, presented by AIA Philadelphia’s Steering Committee of Fellows, seeks to recognize a candidate’s contribution to the categories of leadership, practice and service.

Fon S. Wang, AIA, LEED AP, Director of Historic Preservation at Ballinger – Ms. Wang’s professional expertise stems from a broad range of practical experience in the field of architectural design and historic preservation. Her impressive portfolio ranges from new construction to adaptive reuse and historic preservation for commercial institutional and residential clients. She is a Board Member for the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, Co-chair of Community Outreach Committee for CREW Philadelphia and volunteers her professional design services for the Community Design Collaborative.

This year’s recipient, Nicetown CDC, plans to turn an empty 3-acre right of way beneath Roosevelt Boulevard into a lively community sports court. The design features basketball courts, a soccer field, a skate park, rain gardens, a public green and a plaza, promising to reanimate a quiet section of Nicetown’s Germantown Commercial Corridor.
DILWORTH PARK
KieranTimberlake

“A TRULY CIVIC PROJECT THAT IS INCLUSIVE AND ALLOWS FOR MANY TYPES OF PEOPLE TO COEXIST HAPPILY AND IN A VERY CALM WAY.”

– 2015 DESIGN AWARDS JURY

Originally built in the 1970s as part of an urban renewal initiative, the earlier design for Dilworth Park was plagued by hard surfaces, walls, barriers and inexplicable changes in elevation. The renovation of Dilworth Park restores its stature as a place of great civic engagement, while bringing the urban infrastructure of its transportation network into the modern day.

The new park reinforces the center of William Penn’s original plan for Philadelphia as a place where people from diverse backgrounds are welcome to convene, observe, and enjoy the vitality of the city.
Over the past several years, the University of Pennsylvania has made a concerted effort to reverse the inward-focus throughout the campus and to reconnect with the city and the community to which it is so inextricably linked.

This transformation is most evident in the mixed-use revitalization of Walnut Street as it traverses the campus. Meyerson Hall shares an urban plaza with the Furness Library and an enviable location both by virtue of its relationship to what is perceived as a primary “gateway” to the campus at 34th & Walnut Streets and its frontage on College Green.

Many of the facilities along Walnut Street and throughout campus have been reshaped to reconnect with the street. Meyerson Hall is the programmatic core and the public face of PennDesign. As such, any modification to Meyerson has the dual responsibility of addressing the pedagogic and programmatic needs of the School of Design while respecting the relationship that exists with Furness and the College Green and establish a new face to Walnut Street and its urban context.
This facility—dedicated to wellness, fitness, and theater—helps to revitalize the south side of the Swarthmore College campus and serves as a gateway to the athletic facilities. An extensive example of building recycling and reuse, the project goals of environmental stewardship and a progressive contextual design are reinforced through the deployment of the building’s materials. The building reuses the footprint of a former squash court building, including the original concrete foundation, slab, and retaining walls.

The first floor façade was repurposed from overstock and scrap stone from several previous campus projects, including the College’s oldest buildings. Using input from the masons and a series of mockups, a system was developed for categorizing and cutting the stone. Wall construction was guided by a set of rules and key dimensions that described the architectural intent and allowed the intuition and artistry of the mason to resolve the detail.
MERIT AWARDS: UNBUILT

EwingCole | Dayananda Sagar University
Client: Dayananda Sagar University
Collaborating Firm: The Creative
Landscape Architect: Biome Landscape Studio
Renderings: EwingCole

MERIT AWARDS: BUILT

Atkin Olshin Schade Architects | Temple Adath Israel
Client: Temple Adath Israel
Structural Engineer: Keast & Hood
Systems Engineer: Bruce E. Brooks & Associates
Lighting Design: BEAM
General Contractor: Wohlsen Construction
Photographer: Tom Crane Photography

ISA - Interface Studio Architects LLC | Mixed Medium
Client: Anonymous
Renderings: ISA - Interface Studio Architects

Wallace Roberts & Todd | Fringe Arts
Client: Fringe Arts
Structural Engineer: Larson Landis
Systems Engineer: Alderson Engineering, Inc.
Acoustical Consultant: Metropolitan Acoustics
General Contractor: Jeffrey M. Brown Associates
Photographer: Halkin Mason Photography
DESIGN AWARDS

ISA - Interface Design Architects LLC | Flexhouse 2
Client: Ranquist Development
Collaborating Firm: Osterhaus McCarthy
Structural Engineer: S&P Engineers
Civil Engineer: Eriksson Engineering Associates
General Contractor: John James Construction
Photographer: Nicholas James Photography

Wallace Roberts & Todd | Hoover-Mason Trestle
Client: Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority
Structural Engineer: SGH Engineering
Mechanical/Electrical Engineer: Lehigh Valley Engineers
Landscape Architect: Wallace Roberts & Todd
General Contractor: Boyle Construction
Photographers: Halkin Mason Photography & Christenson Photography

HONOR AWARDS: UNBUILT

Ambit Architecture | Strathmere Love Shack
Client: Anonymous
Structural Engineer: Structural Design Associates
General Contractor: Burgese Builders
Photographer: Ambit Architecture

ISA - Interface Studio Architects LLC | MicroPhila
Client: Anonymous
Renderings: ISA Interface Studio Architects
Jacobs Global Buildings | Shenyang Industrial Design Center
Client: Shenyang Huanggu Economy Bureau
Engineer: Gaoneng Zhubu Architectural Design Company Inc.
General Contractor: SAP Architectural & Engineering Design
Renderings: A-Trace Digital Technology Company

Bohlin Cywinski Jackson | Cheri Flores Pavilion
Client: The Hermann Park Conservancy
Structural Engineer: Cardno Haynes Whaley
Systems Engineer: Infrastructure Associates
Landscape Architect: Hoerr Schaudt
General Contractor: Tellepsen Builders
Photographer: Casey Dunn Photography

HONOR AWARDS: BUILT

John Milner Architects | Webb Farmhouse at Longwood Gardens
Client: Longwood Gardens
Structural Engineer: Gredell & Associates
Systems Engineer: Bruce E. Brooks & Associates
Landscape Architect: Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architect
General Contractor: Taylor Kline
Photographer: Longwood Gardens

Digsau | PEC Bigham Leatherberry Wise Place
Client: People’s Emergency Center Community Development Corporation
Structural Engineer: MacInstosh Engineering
Systems Engineer: BHG Consulting
Landscape Architect: Studio Bryan Hanes
General Contractor: JBL Builds
Photography: Halkin Mason Photography
DESIGN AWARDS

EwingCole | Ambulatory Cancer Center
Client: Memorial Sloan Kettering
Structural Engineer: Robert Silman and Associates
Electrical Engineer: EwingCole
Mechanical Engineer: Jaros, Baum & Bolles
Site, Civil and Landscape Architect: John Meyer Consulting
General Contractor: Hunter Roberts Construction Group
Photographer: Ron Blunt Architectural Photography

Erdy McHenry | Evo + SkyGreen at Cira Center South
Client: Brandywine Realty Trust
Engineer: Thornton Tomasetti
Systems Engineer: Bala Consulting Engineers
Curtainwall Consultant: Front
General Contractor: Tutor Perini Building Corporation
Photographer: Paul Drzal, AIA

Digsau | Matchbox
Client: Swarthmore College
Collaborating Firm: CVMNext
General Contractor: CVMNext
Photographer: Halkin Mason Photography
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