

AIA Richmond Chapter 2006 Design Awards

Honor Award Winner

Project: Richmond Montessori School

Owner: Richmond Montessori School; Richmond, Virginia
Architect: 3North Architects, Richmond, VA
Location: Richmond, VA
Date of Completion: September 2004
Building Type: Academic

Jury Comments:

- Well executed small addition to a larger complex.
- Articulation establishes an end condition to the existing building and a destination of special note.
- The massing and roof line address the existing conditions. The steel trees act as a counter point linking the two parcels and provide a happy entry point for entering children.
- Simple acts – such as the diagonal wall increase the perceived volume of a relatively small space
- Simple humble detailing makes best use of what was probably a modest budget
- Wall of light sparks – constellation

Owner's Program:

Provide a freestanding, two-story classroom addition to the existing Richmond Montessori campus for the "free and intense study of the sciences." This project constitutes the first phase of the school's master plan to enlarge the school's facilities.

Site Description:

The site is located on Parham Road, near the western end of the campus, which is surrounded by natural landscape including densely wooded areas and fields. Siting was based on creating a secluded environment, separate from other school studies, for optimal and total immersion in the scientific study of the natural surroundings.

Statement of Design Solution:

The *parti* for the overall design solution was to provide an open floor plan on both levels, with a continuously glazed, canted wall at the west façade, thus optimizing views and exposure to the outdoors. A tall canopy provides shelter in transition from an existing building to the newly added building, and an exterior stairway leads to the second floor level.

A mixture of traditional and modern materials, including cmu block, concrete, granite, steel, aluminum, corrugated galvalum, and glass block, was used in a contemporary design that serves as a counterpoint to the natural surroundings. Based on the idea that the building itself could be among the instruments for the study of the natural sciences, one of its walls features glass block representing the constellation Orion on the one side and a fellow constellation on the other, symbolically reminding the students of the entire universe outside of the school's walls. On an exterior gathering area outside the addition, where granite pavers are engraved with donor's names, stands a raised podium, referred to as "the touchstone," which provides a teaching pedestal, or the proverbial "soapbox."

Credits

Architect: 3 north
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Team members: Sanford Bond, Todd Dykshorn, Kristi Lane, Damon Pearson

Owner: Richmond Montessori School
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Richmond VA 23229

Structural Engineer: Fox and Associates
1006 Pump Road
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Richmond VA 23233
804-740-2641

Civil Engineer: Carter Design
1032 Peck Road
Richmond VA 23235
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Contractor: Superior Contracting Company, Inc.
1521 Huguenot Road
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Midlothian VA 23113
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Photographer: Kip Dawkins Photography
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Front and Side Elevation Detail



Stair / roof detail