

DALLAS  
REACHES FOR THE

STARS

**STAR**ARCHITECT N. (STAR + ARCHITECT) **1** : ONE WHO DESIGNS BUILDINGS AND HAS ACHIEVED CELEBRITY STATUS IN THE POPULAR PRESS AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS **2** ; JET-SETTING ARCHITECT WITH LIFESTYLE AND CAREER RESEMBLING A HOLLYWOOD STAR.



# THE METROPLEX GETS A NEW CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

BY MICHELANGELO SABATINO

A constellation of stars has converged on downtown Dallas to design new buildings and outdoor spaces. With the completion of the **Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House** and the **Dee and Charles Wylie Theatre**, due to open in fall 2009, the Dallas Arts District will boast four Pritzker Prize laureate-designed buildings. While six Pritzker winners—Philip Johnson, Rafael Moneo, I. M. Pei, Renzo Piano, James Stirling and Robert Venturi—were honored after completing their projects for Houston, the Dallas Art District architects received their commissions only after achieving their Pritzker status.

The new **Center for the Performing Arts** is only part of the story. The Trinity River Corridor Project promises to bring lakes, parks, sidewalk cafés, and waterfront condos to downtown and surrounding areas. The green swath and river will be spanned by at least two “signature” bridges designed by Spanish architect-engineer Santiago Calatrava; the first architectural project to emerge out of this ambitious plan is the Trinity River Audubon Center by Antoine Predock.



## KEY

- 1-5 Dallas Center for the Performing Arts
  - 1 Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House
  - 2 Annette Strauss Artist Square
  - 3 Performance Park
  - 4 Dee and Charles Wylie Theatre
  - 5 City Performance Hall
- 6 The Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center
- 7 Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe
- 8 The Belo Mansion
- 9 The Trammell and Margaret Crow Collection of Asia
- 10 Dallas Museum of Art
- 11 Nasher Sculpture Center
- 12 Proposed Museum Tower site
- 13 Woodall Rodgers Park
- 14 Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts
- 15 St. Paul United Methodist Church
- 16 Fellowship Church
- 17 One Arts Plaza
- 18 Dallas Black Dance Theatre

TOP: Bird's eye view of Dallas Arts District.  
 ABOVE: Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House (and One Arts Plaza in background) across the Woodall Rodgers Freeway.

The concentration of high-profile buildings in the Dallas Arts District has generated a spirited debate about what is to be valued in contemporary architecture. Critics have charged that the Arts District will amount to a playground for the elite. Moreover, the claim is that rather than create an inclusive civic place by working collectively to meet the challenges of the city, architects have given Dallas iconic objects, destinations for wealthy benefactors—not a vibrant arts district of mixed uses for people of mixed incomes.

David Dillon wrote in the June 8, 2008 *Dallas Morning News*, “What’s glaringly absent are the elements that would make the district a true civic showcase, where art meets life every day.” He provides suggestions to create a more integrated district: more mixed-use development, more connections with mass transit, a comprehensive landscape plan. Although the criticism is worth considering, it should not undermine the efforts of those who have worked in earnest to get the Arts District to where it is now. As the new buildings of the Center for the Performing Arts begin to settle into their functions, there will be plenty of time for correctives in the form of additional transportation, landscape, and retail initiatives mentioned by Dillon that will bring people to the district on weekdays and weekends. Hopefully too, the Arts District will open up to more than just high-end residential units like One Arts Plaza and the proposed 40-story Museum Tower designed by LA firm Johnson Fain. Joint programming of all the institutions of the Arts District will be key to promoting activity throughout the week and weekends.

Seen from neighboring Houston, however, the monumental effort of Dallas’s leaders and the ambition of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts board committees are worthy of praise and close examination. Although Houston’s recently inaugurated Discovery Green is an exception to several years of idle, it lacks the design ambition and scale of the Dallas Arts District and other recently completed public places such as Chicago’s 24.5 acre Millennium Park, inaugurated in 2004.

## ROME WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY

What makes the 19-block, 68-acre Dallas Arts District distinctive is the way it brings together a number of institutions that serve like-minded cultural constituencies. Following the bond election of 1979, the City of Dallas under mayor Robert Folsom set aside a dozen dilapidated blocks north of downtown, in the wedge formed by the Woodall Rodgers Freeway and Central Expressway, for the future Arts District. Then, in 1982, following an international competition, the Boston and San Francisco landscape architects Sasaki Associates designed a great urban street for Dallas. Rather than eliminate cars altogether, the Sasaki plan sought to encourage pedestrian activity by way of tree-lined Flora Street, anchored at one end by the Dallas Museum of Art (1978-1993), designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes, with the recently completed One Arts Plaza on the opposite end. This mixed-use residential, commercial, and retail high-rise designed by Dallas architects Morrison Seifert Murphy is the first attempt to introduce residential units, albeit high-end, into the arts district. Hopefully, developers will introduce middle-income units on the fringes of the Arts District. The Elaine D. and Charles A. Sammons Park designed by Paris-based Michel Desvigne and the Annette Strausse Artist Square by Foster + Partners builds upon the original master plan.

Although the proximity of different arts institutions along Flora Street recall the Lincoln Center in New York, designed in the 1960s by a number of distinguished architects for related yet distinct organizations, it lacks the overall density of its Manhattan counterpart. This should not come as a surprise given the differences between the two cities. One can look closer to home to see that the trend toward the campus model is shared by other arts districts. Fort Worth has developed an arts district of its own with Philip Johnson’s Amon Carter Museum (1961), Louis I. Kahn’s Kimbell Art Museum (1972), Tadao Ando’s Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2002), and a number of other cultural institutions all in close proximity. The

BELOW: Entrance facing Trailhead Pond.  
BOTTOM: Site plan.



TRINITY RIVER AUDUBON CENTER:

## THE NATURE OF SYMBOLISM

The first architectural result of the Trinity River Corridor reclamation scheme is the recently opened Trinity River Audubon Center designed by Antoine Predock of Albuquerque with Brown Reynolds Waford (BRW) as architects of record. The symbolism of the bird-shaped plan and the bold cantilevers of the elevation facing Trailhead Pond merge abstraction and figuration. The wood and corten steel cladding, exposed concrete, and green roof make this a well-intentioned building despite occasional awkwardness. Predock’s building can be added to a growing list of nationally and internationally acclaimed architects converging onto the new design capital of Texas. For more information see <http://predock.com/trinity/trinity.html>.

WINSPEAR OPERA HOUSE:

# HIGH-TECH MONUMENTALITY

When the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House opens in fall 2009, it will provide performance space for the Dallas Opera, the Texas Ballet Theatre, touring Broadway productions, and numerous other performances. The opera house design is distinguished by its high-tech monumentality and transparency. The deep-red glass panels that wrap around the auditorium volume thrusting out of the canopy contrast with the precious travertine of Piano's nearby Nasher Sculpture Center (2003), and the Indiana limestone-clad Dallas Museum of Art. The openness of Nasher's transparent "storefront" façade is echoed in the transparency of the Winspear Opera House.

A restaurant, café, and possibly even a bookstore will remain open throughout the day in order to welcome both opera patrons and general public into the building. A clear glass façade can be raised like a garage door on the east side of the Opera House, where the café and the restaurant are located. The reflective red panels and the rounded contours of the auditorium echo the dramatic baroque draperies typically employed for theater stages. I. M. Pei & Partners' Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center (1989) to its west also rethinks in abstract terms the sculptural quality of



Rendering of Margaret McDermott Performance Hall at the Winspear Opera House.

baroque architecture.

Encouraging street life throughout the day outside of the performance schedule is key to the vitality of Flora Street. A similar open access is stressed in Foster + Partners' design for the Annette Strauss Artist Square, an outdoor performing arts space that can accommodate as many as 5,000 people on its lawn and terraced seating.

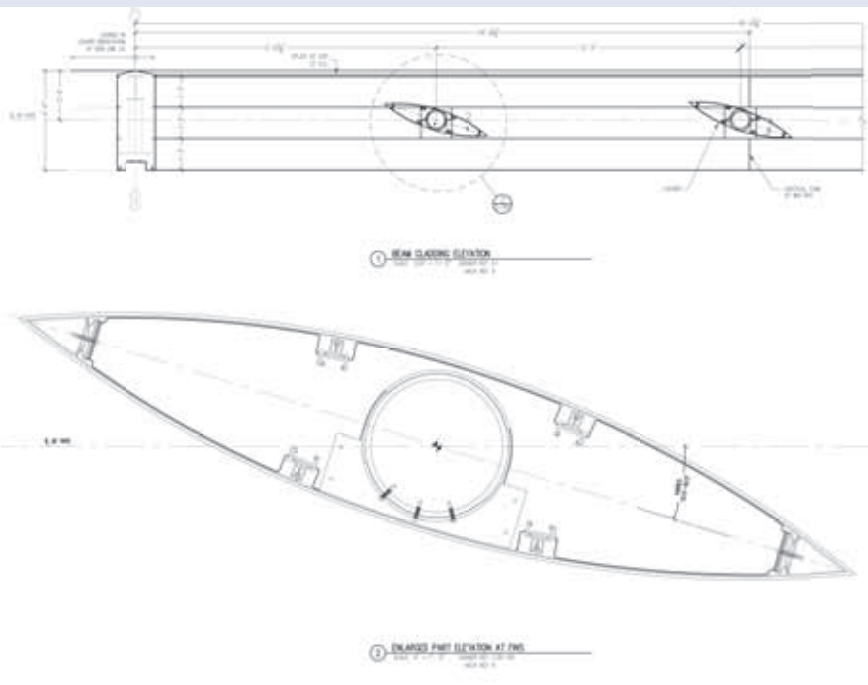
A monumental 60-foot sun canopy envelops the 2,200-seat auditorium of the opera house and projects beyond the building to create an urban space shaded from the Texas sun. It invites operagoers and the general public to linger outside

**CLIENT:** DALLAS CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS  
**ARCHITECTS:** FOSTER + PARTNERS; KENDALL/HEATON ASSOCIATES INC.  
**CONTRACTOR:** LINBECK CONSTRUCTION CORP.

the lobby and public concourse. The spacing and angles of its custom-designed louvers reduce the air-conditioning load on the building. Although the building has not gone through the LEED certification process so far, Foster + Partners incorporated many energy-efficient design features for exceptional sustainability in comparison with other buildings of its scope and size.

BELOW: Detail of sun canopy louvers.

BELOW RIGHT: View of sun canopy with Meyerson Hall in background.



addition being planned for the Kimbell by Renzo Piano Building Workshop will likely add another distinguished building to the mix.

Despite what some critics have claimed, the Dallas Arts District will not only serve as a destination for performances but will also offer opportunities to generate a rich, interactive learning environment. The city's public magnet school for performing and visual arts, Brad Cloepfil-designed Booker T. Washington High School, connects students to performance professionals. Woodall Rodgers Park, also known as "Deck Park," designed by The Office of James Burnett, will provide a five-acre green space and pedestrian bridge across the highway that currently divides the West End Historical District, the Arts District, and Uptown Dallas. Thomas Phifer & Partners of recent Brochstein Pavilion fame will design the cafe and performance pavilions.

## A RIVER WALK FOR DALLAS

Not too far from the Arts District, the Trinity River Corridor promises to offer residents and tourists new recreation and social venues. The Trinity River has suffered much abuse over the decades, having lost its natural meandering course as it became trapped between streets and highways. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the president of the Trinity Trust Foundation, Dr. Gail Thomas, and many others, the Trinity River Corridor project promises to be the green heart of the metroplex. It will soon revitalize the city along its banks while addressing flood control, transportation, recreation, and environmental restoration. The project was initiated under former mayor Laura Miller when the City Council unanimously passed a "Balanced Vision Plan" for Dallas. Devised by urban designer Alex Krieger of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (with collaborators such as transportation expert William Eager of Seattle), the master plan aspires to reconnect the affluent northern parts of Dallas and its downtown with less affluent neighborhoods. The Trinity River Corridor project is scheduled for completion in 2014 (with a "beat 2014" motto). The task involves 27 government agencies involved in planning everything from toll roads to lakes.

It is tempting to compare these projects with those of other cities, which is useful, but only to a certain extent. Dallasites will not suddenly wake up in a city that reproduces all that is magical about Manhattan's venues or San Francisco's access to near pristine nature. Rather, thirty years in the making, a unique and substantially improved urban core is emerging in Dallas.

## BLUE-CHIP VS "EMERGENT" ARCHITECTS?

In making these important additions to the built environment of Dallas possible, business and civic leaders have relied on the expertise of a number of American and European architects, landscape architects, and urban planners. American institutional and private clients, unlike their European counterparts, seem reluctant to adopt the talent-scouting method of open competitions as a way to inspire good design. They prefer selective interviewing instead. More than a tastemaker, Deedie Potter Rose has been part of a core of dedicated volunteers who have galvanized Dallas's business community into supporting the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts. She is also a tireless promoter of high quality architecture. Most European countries have ministries of culture that are responsible for overseeing and undertaking major arts projects. In the United States we must rely mainly on the private sector for support. This makes enlightened citizens like Rose essential to the survival of the arts. Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." This is an apt description of what Rose and her associates have accomplished in Dallas.

The dynamics propelling the Arts District and the Trinity River Corridor

SEEN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF TWO POSTMODERN TOWERS IN DOWNTOWN DALLAS DESIGNED BY SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL, THE **AUSTERE SPACES** OF THE WYLY THEATRE SERVE AS A LESSON IN **MODESTY** AND A HYMN TO **VERTICALITY** IN A LAND OF HORIZONTAL SPRAWL.



WYLY THEATRE:  
RADICAL CHIC

**CLIENT:** DALLAS CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS  
**ARCHITECTS:** REM KOOLHASS (OMA); KENDALL/HEATON ASSOCIATES INC.  
**CONTRACTOR:** LINBECK CONSTRUCTION CORP.

Rendering, Wyly Theatre.



ABOVE: Dallas Theatre Center formerly on the Arts District site. LEFT: Construction before cladding.



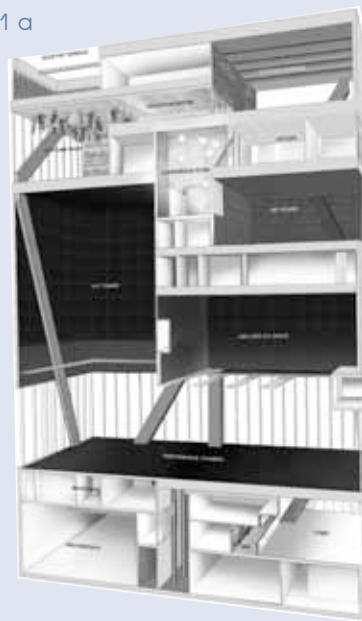
The Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre is the most unconventional building in the Arts District. It will provide a home for the Dallas Theater Center, the Dallas Black Dance Theatre, and the Anita

Martinez Ballet Folklorico. In 2001 a group of potential architects for the theatre were invited to deliver lectures. Those included Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Daniel Libeskind, Snøhetta, and UN Studio. Deedie Potter Rose chaired the committee that eventually selected Rem Koolhaas / OMA.

The design includes the 600-seat Potter Rose Performance Hall and a black box theatre, as well as support spaces organized vertically, stacked on top and below the performance space. Seen against the backdrop of two postmodern towers in downtown Dallas designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the austere spaces of the Wyly Theatre serve as a lesson in modesty and a hymn to verticality in a land of horizontal sprawl.

With its exposed structure of reinforced concrete and suspended steel, the Wyly refuses the gravitas and glamour of such materials as the travertine of the Nasher and Indiana

limestone of the Dallas Museum of Art. The understated, even gritty quality of the Wyly echoes the recently demolished corrugated steel shed building that once served as an alternative performance space for the Dallas Theatre Center. The curtain wall that wraps around the Wyly tower is made of unpainted aluminum extrusions of different diameters; the overall effect is that of an undulating theater curtain wrapped around a volume. In an attempt to integrate the building with the rest of the city, the Wyly can be entered through a downward sloping ground plane known as the "draw" or the "scoop". This subterranean entrance allowed the designers to keep the performance space visible to the public on both Flora Street and Ross Avenue.



Three-dimensional building section.

reclamation reflect the ways globalization has increased competition among cultural institutions and their architects, who now come from far and wide to win commissions and realize projects—usually with the help of local firms who serve as architects of record.

The immediate economic gains are clear. According to the Fall 2005 issue of *Stages*, preliminary studies have shown that the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts will create up to 2,000 new jobs in the arts and hospitality industries, and generate an estimated \$170,000 million for the Dallas economy. Cities are competing to make themselves more attractive places to live and work, and in order to generate revenue related to tourism and conventions. Although opponents of the “creative class” strategy for revitalizing cities claim it perpetuates an elitist attitude, civic and business leaders can promote initiatives that spread wealth and opportunities.

Paying for good design—rather than opting for more expedient alternatives—not only elevates the day-to-day life of a city’s inhabitants, it attracts people from the region, the nation, and around the world.

Accordingly, discerning developers and civic leaders have realized that good design makes for good business. In “Pennzoil: Houston’s Towering Achievement,” published in Ada Louise Huxtable’s 1976 *Kicked a Building Lately?*, the developer Gerald D. Hines described the money-generating dimension of good design as “status value.” An interview with Mr. Hines in this issue of *Cite* explains his strategy and experiences as a developer. In the market of Class A office leases, returns can be dramatically increased by high-quality architecture that attracts clients who want to be associated with these distinguished spaces. In her article, Huxtable identified Houston as the place “where money, power, and patronage are coming together in a city of singular excitement and significance for the 1970s.” If that was true of Houston then, it is certainly truer of Dallas today.

In the public sphere, buildings that contribute to an expanding appreciation of the city can revitalize its prospects, in which case the need to focus on choices based on quality rather than parochial loyalties is crucial. This is not to say that local architects should be ostracized from designing of their own cities. But ideally local talent coexists with and complements “outsider” talent. Consider the “Mies effect” experienced in Houston after Ludwig Mies van der Rohe completed Cullinan Hall (1958) for The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, or the “Piano effect” after Renzo Piano (who had never worked in the United States) designed the Menil Collection building in 1987. One only need recall the 1990 RDA tour, “After Mies” that focused on Houston architecture inspired by the German emigré architect to see the point.

Few U.S. cities are matching the large-scale investment of cultural and financial capital that Dallas is making in its public architecture. It is more the city’s sense of goodwill toward architecture and faith in the process of pursuing greatness than the aspiration for flawless design that should inspire others. Bold initiatives concerning design and the environment sponsored by a small group often function as a catalyst for other courageous initiatives. Dallasites are working collectively to improve the architecture, landscape, and infrastructure of their city, and have channeled the expertise and glamour of starchitects to help them achieve this ambitious goal. ☆

SANTIAGO CALATRAVA’S BRIDGES:

## THE ART OF ENGINEERING

Fundamental to the Trinity River Corridor’s regenerative-type role are two freeway bridges designed by Santiago Calatrava. The first of these, the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge whose completion is expected by 2010, is an airy and elegant tensile structure. Extending the Woodall Rodgers Freeway across the Trinity to Singleton, West Dallas. The second of the bridges, the Margaret McDermott Bridge, will carry U.S. Interstate 30 connecting Dallas and Fort Worth. With their lofty sculptural forms, these two bridges will provide visual markers that can be seen from the distance and will no doubt draw residents and tourists alike to the recreational and entertainment spaces of the Trinity River Corridor.



Bird's eye view of the Trinity Corridor Project Model.



Rendering, Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.



Model, Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.



Rendering, View of Margaret McDermott Bridge from the Trinity River.

FEW U.S. CITIES ARE MATCHING THE **LARGE-SCALE INVESTMENT** OF CULTURAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL THAT DALLAS IS MAKING IN ITS PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE.