

# INTERIOR DESIGN

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**The first of three buildings** to anchor the eastern edge of the burgeoning Dallas Arts District, 1 Arts Plaza is a 24-story mixed-used structure by Morrison Seifert Murphy. Clad mostly in a white grid of precast concrete, the asymmetrically massed block is restrained by Dallas standards, exemplifying a new aesthetic in motion. At the base, glassed-in extensions containing restaurants and retail flank a landscaped plaza. Straight ahead is the double-height lobby, dominated by a pair of six-panel high-definition screens. This "generative digital video portrait" combines real-time images of the lobby with a feedback loop, thus juxtaposing your own fleeting image with computer-generated "memories" that boggle the brain. This jarring sense of futuristic unreality is not unlike the state of design in the Big D.

Morrison Seifert Murphy has its own office up on the 13th floor. In the white-painted meeting room, principals Lionel Morrison, Susan Seifert, and Pat Murphy zip through a slide show detailing the firm's considerable contributions to a city hell-bent on overcoming its predilection for Darth Vader curtain walls and faux-antique facades. Morrison chuckles when someone mentions the Crescent, the Brobdingnagian mansard-roofed mishmash that Philip Johnson insisted represented Texas Regionalism.

"The zeitgeist that exists today would not allow that to be built," Morrison says. "Johnson would be laughed out of town." So would the 1955 mayor who rejected a public sculpture by Harry Bertoia, declaring it a "bunch of junk." The turning point was the 2003 opening of the Nasher Sculpture

Center by Renzo Piano Building Workshop. A glass-roofed jewel box of a museum, it was shocking in its understatement and immediately became a touchstone for serious architectural aspirations.

Like many cities revitalizing their cores, Dallas is transforming brownfields, parking lots, and obsolete buildings into cultural destinations, public parks, and contemporary mixed-use complexes. In the process, a hodgepodge of former dead zones is being knit into an almost seamless stretch of progressive design. It extends north-south from uptown to downtown and east-west from 1 Arts Plaza to the snaking mud hole known as the Trinity River—and will soon go beyond, thanks to, count 'em, three Santiago Calatrava bridges in the works. Things are changing fast. "If you haven't paid attention in the past five years, you might not recognize Dallas today, and you absolutely won't recognize it five years from now," Booziotis & Company Architects associate Peter Doncaster says.

Doncaster won an AIA Dallas competition for the new Dallas Center for Architecture. Collaborating via e-mail, he and two of his friends from Tulane University's undergraduate architecture school—Nicholas Marshall of Nodesign in New Orleans and Gabriel Smith of Thomas



## **The Big D Is for Design**

***In Dallas, nostalgia architecture has gone the way of J.R. Ewing***

Phifer and Partners in New York—came up with an interior retrofit to get the ground-level office noticed without a costly makeover of the host building's nondescript exterior: An irregularly shaped box will effectively become an interior second skin, while LEDs mounted inside the front window cast a glow over the adjacent Woodall Rodgers Freeway at night.

By 2011, part of that freeway will be buried under a 5-acre park with a café, a movie pavilion, and a concert stage. Designed by the Office of James Burnett and likened to Chicago's Millennium Park, this green zone will segue into the Arts District—which, with typical everything-is-bigger-in-Texas swagger, is being billed as

the largest in the U.S., with 19 blocks, 68 1/2 acres, and 26 organizations. Dallasites also like to boast that their Arts District is the only place you'll find buildings by four Pritzker Prize winners in a single block. Joining Renzo Piano's museum and I.M. Pei's symphony hall by 2009 will be Norman Foster's Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House and Rem Koolhaas's Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, a collaboration with Joshua Prince-Ramus of Rex. The latter two structures are part of the much-hyped Dallas Center for the Performing Arts.

Another Pritzker club member, Thom Mayne, is designing the Museum of Nature & Science two blocks away in Victory Park. Once home to a utility plant, the 75-acre property is being turned into—cue braggadocio—the "most vibrant and innovative mixed-use urban district in the country," according to the Web site of the Hillwood Development Company, owned by none other than Ross Perot, Jr. HKS Architects designed the area's shimmering steel, glass, and limestone W Dallas Victory Hotel & Residences, with apartments by Morrison Seifert Murphy and Cadwalader Design and a triangular helipad perched jauntily on the roof. Coming soon: the House, a luxury high-rise condominium by Elkus Manfredi Architects, Philippe Starck, and Yoo.

Luxury is taking a contemporary turn all over town. In transforming a dilapidated Hilton Hotel into the hip Hotel Palomar Dallas, Cheryl Rowley Design made a statement combining 1960's architecture with references to today's skyline and the eternal openness of the Texas landscape. At the Stoneleigh Hotel & Spa, which has reopened after a \$36 million renovation, ForrestPerkins based its palette for public

*From top:* A rendering of the acrylic-sided swimming pool cantilevered off the annex to the 1927 neo-Gothic building that Tihany Design has transformed into the Joule, A Luxury Collection Hotel. Peter Walker and Partners Landscape Architecture's garden for the Nasher Sculpture Center by Renzo Piano Building Workshop.





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*Clockwise from top left: Doors to showrooms at the International on Turtle Creek, the Trinity Design District's 1949 International Harvester warehouse renovated by Good Fulton & Farrell Architects. The cast-bronze rattlesnake head and leather-covered armrest on the bar at Fearing's, a restaurant by Johnson Studio. A living area by Morrison Seifert Murphy at the W Dallas Victory Hotel & Residences. The FosterPerkins reinterpretation of the lobby at the Stoneleigh Hotel & Spa. Its 1923 building. Foster + Partners's rendering of the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House for the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts.*

spaces and guest rooms on the wine red, emerald green, and platinum colors of the art deco building's marble columns. (The penthouse suite by Dorothy Draper's Architectural Clearing House has meanwhile been restored.)

Judging from the Regency-lite exterior of the new Ritz-Carlton, Dallas, Robert A.M. Stern Architects missed the memo. Inside, however, Fearing's restaurant by Johnson Studio perfectly captures today's Dallas via a series of glowing spaces that convey grandeur, whimsy, and mystery. The padded armrest that fronts the bar is covered in snakeskin-stamped leather—and culminates in a cast-bronze rattlesnake head. It's a touch of Texas hip-kitsch that works, if only because the other rooms, including a gazebo with a diaphanous ribbon chandelier, are such counterpoints.

At the smaller Joule, A Luxury Collection Hotel, Tihany Design also incorporated Texan references: Think oak beams angled like an oil derrick. For a touch of daring, an acrylic-sided swimming pool cantilevers almost 9 feet over Main Street. "Dallas is starting to feel like a city," Adam D. Tihany notes. "On a Thursday or Friday night downtown, you can't move—there are so many people." The new Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts

by Allied Works Architecture is expected to provide an infusion of daytime street life, as will residents of the soon-to-be-built Museum Tower by Johnson Fair with interiors by Booziotis and Bodron + Fruit.

To furnish those apartments and others like them, the International on Turtle Creek has opened in the Trinity Design District. This 1949 warehouse, where International Harvester once stored tractor parts, has been transformed by Good Fulton & Farrell Architects into a showroom building with tenants including Arc-Com, the Bright Group, and Tufenkian Carpets.

"I tell young architects that Dallas is a great place to practice. The thriving business climate means money to get things built," Lionel Morrison of Morrison Seifert Murphy says. "And we don't have the architectural baggage that many cities do." At least not anymore. —*Laura Fisher Kaiser*

