The Ohio Masonry Association, completing its 56th year of masonry promotion, hosted its annual Award of Excellence in Masonry Design program February 10, 2010 at the Embassy Suites, Dublin, Ohio. The evening presentation and dinner recognized ten projects for the use, design, and installation of masonry units.

Honored at the 2010 OMA Excellence in Masonry Design were the project owner, architect, mason contractor and the producer of the materials. Winners traveled from all over Ohio to celebrate their achievements. The following is a listing of the winning projects accompanied by the jury’s comments.

Excellence in Masonry Design Award
Hilliard Bradley High School
Owner: Hilliard City Schools Board of Education
Mason Contractor: The Kenny Huston Co.
Producer: Hanson Aggregates

The jury members, after much discussion, were unanimous in its selection of this project to receive the prestigious Excellence in Masonry Award, the highest recognition that a project can achieve in this design awards competition. They felt that this project displayed a certain restrained and sophisticated design approach not often found in the building type.

Their choice was predicated on design factors that run the gamut of scales and applications of masonry, both on the exterior and interior. From afar, the multiple forms used to articulate the varied functional elements and create a visually interesting silhouette on the landscape gain their unity through the use of what appears to be the same orange/red-colored brick cladding. However, as one draws nearer the building, one realizes that the architect actually uses a subtle mix of orange/tan brick to enliven the walls as well as a second ... dark gray ... colored brick to create very subtle but effective, horizontal banding.

The arcaded entries display a sure hand in proportioning the columns so as to convey a sense of protection and strength as well as a very subtle statement of a simple pediment. The limited number of windows, cleanly inserted as “punched-openings” in the brick cladding reinforce this minimalist approach.

When one enters the building to find a courtyard, here is where one sees the architect successfully employing the dark brick in a different fashion that of articulating the large bays. One also sees the successful integration of building and hardscape through the use of concrete pavers that use the same color mix.

Upon entering the building, one finds that the architect has continued the use of both brick and concrete masonry, again in a very simple, cleanly-detailed manner. For all of the above, the jury is secure in awarding this project the 2010 Excellence in Masonry Award.
Religious Merit Design Award
New Promise Church
Owner: New Promise Church
Mason Contractor: Lorenzo Masonry
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

The jury felt that this church carried on the centuries-old tradition of architects and builders in their use of masonry for religious buildings. The solidity, timelessness and permanence conveyed by the walls of brick and concrete masonry units reinforce the same characteristics that constitute a faith base community. The jury was of the opinion that the architects were responding to cost constraints by skillfully using the CMU’s in place of traditional natural or cast stone for articulating the base and cornice and in the horizontal banding and vertical pilaster elements on the walls.

Residential Merit Design Award
Larimar
Owner: Willowick Acquisition Partnership LLC
Mason Contractor: Northeast Masonry, Inc.
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

With a building typology often driven by cost constraints, this project represents how masonry can project a sense of aesthetics and permanence. The architects skillfully used the split-faced units to emphasize the ground floor of the major mass as well as to create the horizontal banding at the floor lines and panels on the projecting bays on the front. Smooth face provided a distinction for a two-story frontice piece against which then two porches are viewed. The jury felt that the one element of the building that seemed to lack the detailing of the masonry was that forming the white cornice.
2010 Award Winners

Commercial Merit Design Award
McDonald’s Westerville
Owner: McDonald’s Corporation
Architectural Firm: Williams - Shepherd Architects
Mason Contractor: Karst + Sons
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

One has to be impressed that the best known, fast-food, franchise in America has decided to abandon its decades old red & white, Mansard-roof, prototype in favor of one based on contemporary design principles. The jury felt it was no accident that the architects selected concrete masonry, brick and stone as the major material palette. It also lauded that the use of these materials did not stop with the front facade, but they wrap the entire building. The jury also noted that the masonry provides a neutral background for the festive orange and yellow awnings and the expressive cornice sculpture that “flies” above the front facade.

Sports Complex Merit Design Award
Women’s Softball Stadium
Owner: The Ohio State University
Architectural Firm: GBBN Architects
Mason Contractor: The Kenny Huston Co.
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

This softball stadium takes its rightful place in terms of design on the OSU campus along side the larger baseball field. It does so through skillful design and detailing that uses a limited pallet of materials. The jury noted the juxtaposition of the solidity of the brick and concrete unit masonry elements as a counter-point to the light, skeletal-like, steel components that comprise both the structural frame and roof of the large and small canopies. This design concept is carried out in the careful detailing of both the masonry and steel railings in the stair and ramp circulation elements. Lastly, concrete pavers that create the large “O” in the plaza hardscape emphasize how versatile and economical masonry is in allowing a building type that often gets little design attention to be an award-winning piece of architecture.
The jury was particularly impressed with manner in which the architects effectively used the brick and stone masonry as a counterpoint to the large glass, curtain wall elements and glazed window bays. They lauded the architect’s careful attention to the masonry detailing at the building’s base, cornice and frames for the glazed elements. Especially noteworthy was the use of split-faced, CMU’s at the hardscape that skillfully creates an aesthetic solution to the ADA accessible ramp and the outdoor seating element.

The design of this uniquely programmed school ... accommodating PK through 12th year ... continues the laudable tradition of school building architecture that has traditionally used masonry in response to both aesthetic and life-cycle, cost considerations. The jury was intrigued by the architect’s attempt to incorporate contemporary translations of traditional elements . . such as the classical cabled and colonnaded facade and mini-temple form that sits on the prominent tower element ... in the building’s design. They also took note of how masonry was used to unify the multi-form massing of the building as well as provide for a very durable and low-maintenance interior.
2010 Award Winners

Educational Merit Design Award
Olentangy Orange High School
Owner: Olentangy Local Schools
Mason Contractor: Kirk Brothers
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

The exterior beauty of this high school is achieved through the architect’s skill in designing with both a bold and sure hand in the use of masonry materials. The use of brick in two colors successfully achieves the banding that emphasizes the horizontality of curved and arcaded elements. The use of two colors of split-faced and smooth face CMU’s successfully break-up the scale of the large-mass elements as well as providing for the articulation of the window surrounds. The jury would have liked to seen how masonry is used on the interior of the project.

Educational Honor Design Award
Avondale Elementary School
Owner: Columbus Public Schools
Architectural Firm: James Bean Architects in Association with Braun & Steidl Architects
Mason Contractor: Buckner + Sons Masonry
Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

The jury was very impressed with this project in that it displayed the architect’s ability to add an addition to a historic building and truly capture the architecture of the historic building without resorting to replication. The well-considered scale and proportion of the addition’s elements, enhanced by the very sophisticated composition of the split-faced and half-height units as well as brick result in a historic contextualism seldom achieved. As one walks around the building one is truly impressed with the beautiful workmanship achieved by the masons on this project. In both the brick arches and corbelled cornices, as well as the stratified wall of alternating split-faced and smooth CMU’s, this building continues the centuries’ old tradition that good architecture is dependent on a team effort of a skilled designer and skilled artisan/builder. The jury wondered how masonry might have been used in the interior.
Public Service Honor Design Award
Covington Fire Station
Owner: The Covington Special Fire Department
Architectural Firm: Candace Goodall Architect
Mason Contractor: Craig Blocker Masonry
Producer: Wayne Builders Supply

The jury concluded its remarks with, “This building proudly proclaims ... I am a fire station.” Building on traditional elements found in this public-safety, building typology ... that of a element that houses the apparatus and other equipment ... and that which a “home away from home” for the firefighters ... the architects have provided the Covington community with an outstanding piece of civic architecture. Especially noteworthy was the skillful detailing that the architects designed and the masons executed in stone above the continuous arches that span the five, large doors on the front of the apparatus bay and the projecting offset of alternating brick on the lintel above the rear doors. This last detail is also effectively used at the transition from the base composed of split-face, CMU’s to the brick walls.