The Ohio Masonry Association, completing its 55th year of masonry promotion, hosted its annual Award of Excellence in Masonry Design program February 13, 2009 at the Crown Plaza, Columbus, Ohio. The evening presentation and dinner recognized nine projects for the use, design, and installation of masonry units.

Honored at the 2009 OMA Excellence in Masonry Design were the project owner, architect, mason contractor and the producer of the materials. Thirty seven individual awards were handed out during the presentation of projects. Winners traveled from all over Ohio to celebrate their achievements.

Hosting the awards presentation was Tony Costello, FAIA, Irving Distinguished Professor, Emeritus of Architecture, Ball State University. Tony Costello served as the jury chairperson, and honored each project by reading the judges comments during the presentation. The following is a listing of the winning projects accompanied by the jury’s comments.

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**Award of Excellence in Masonry Design**

**Champion Middle School**

Owner: Columbus Public Schools

Architects: SEM Partners, Inc.
Machisa Design Services, Inc.

Mason Contractor: Chet Baker Company

Block Producer: Oberfield's Inc.

This project was elevated with assurance by the jury to receive the prestigious 2009 OMA Award of Excellence in Masonry based on the three great characteristics of great architecture as put forth by the Vitruvius, the great Roman poet, architect and engineer … firmness, commodity and delight.

From its simple strength as a formal statement on the landscape to the clean and well-executed detailing exhibited throughout, this building is a testimony to sure-handed and mature design skills of the architect. It is also a testimony to the beauty and elegance that can be achieved with a limited pallet of masonry materials, whether they are exhibited as the primary material, as in the main entry, or as the material that creates a strong visual context and sense of permanence for the light-weight, and transparent metal and glass, curtain-wall system used at the entries.

The jury also was impressed with the clean, strong forms that have been created and enhanced by the white, split-faced, CMUs and the manner in which it acts to cradle and frame the horizontal-ribbed, metal siding that is the fourth material used in the limited material pallet.

Lastly, the jury took delight in the manner in which the architect, employing a bit of structural bravado, a very judicious use of the 8” scored, white CMUs, and a carefully scaled, slit opening, created an entry statement that has to give those entering the building a sense of wonderment.

This project is a testimony to the commitment of the client, architect, and construction team to achieve a piece of architecture that the both the students who attend it and the community who built it can be very proud of.
Merit Design Award Health Care
King’s Daughters Medical Center
Owner: King’s Daughters Medical Center
Architect: Tanner, Stone, Holsinger, Donges & Company
Mason Contractor: Crace Construction Co.
Block Producer: Hanson Aggregates

The jury felt this project deserved to be a recipient of this award based on the fact that it elevated a building typologies … that of a medical office building … far above the minimally-designed building one usually finds.

The role of the split-faced CMUs used is one of creating a solid-looking base that supports the sculptural composition of simple forms above. Included are the simple masses clad in stone veneer and metal panel, both in a medium gray color. These colors give a neutral backdrop for the use of alternating, multi-course, dark red and white, CMU banding on the stair towers, and reinforce the dark red color used to emphasize the arched, roof fascia of the glass tower and entry canopy.

Merit Design Award Commercial
Panera Bread
Owner: Covelli Enterprises
Architect: Phillips / Sekanick Architects
Mason Contractor: Warren Guillard Bricklayers
Block Producer: Akron Brick & Block, an Oldcastle Company

After lengthy discussion, the jury concluded that this project was worthy of an Award based on several factors.

First, it represented a joint effort by the client to invest in … and the architect to seize the opportunity … to elevate a building typology, that of a franchised, commercial strip building … to that which displays a sophisticated, yet fanciful, piece of architecture. The jury also lauded the design commitment to the support side of the building and the landscaping of the entire site, including the outdoor eating areas, often neglected elements in a cost-driven building.

In no small measure, all of the above owe their success to the use of masonry. Also noted was the well-considered and use of the materials… two types of brick, a glazed tile, and a metal panel system … and well designed graphics and signage, to add to the visual festiveness of this building and the anticipation of good food on the part of the consumer. Lastly, the jury acknowledged the use of the relatively, low-cost awnings and umbrellas to add additional color and spirit to this building. Bon appetite!
2009 Award Winners

Merit Design Award Public Service
Village of Versailles
Owner: Village of Versailles
Architect: Garmann Miller Architects & Engineers
Mason Contractor: Craig Blocher Masonry
Block Producer: Wayne Builders Supply

The jury felt that this project is a good example of a project that successfully speaks to the importance of the image that must be conveyed by a piece of civic architecture. In doing so, the building conveys to every citizen the credibility of the system of safety and security of their community. It also speaks to the value placed on those fellow citizens who any day may be called upon to put their life on the line to save the lives of others.

While the pragmatic criteria that are budget driven resulted in the use of a pre-engineered structural and side-wall system, the public safety officials and architect invested wisely in masonry on the most prominent, visual feature, the tower that separates the apparatus bays from the living quarters.

Through the judicious use, skillful design, careful detailing, and excellent workmanship evident in the masonry components of this building … on both the exterior and interior … this building is a credit to the client / architect / construction team and one that should bring great pride to the community it serves.

Merit Design Award Religious
Custer Family Early Childhood Center
Grace Brethren Church of Columbus
Owner: Grace Brethren Church
Architect: Meacham & Apel Architects, Inc.
Mason Contractor: Lassel Sons Masonry, Inc.
Block Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

This project was deemed by the jury to be worthy of an Award for its skillful handling of the challenge of giving an existing building both a needed addition while also creating a new image for this faith-community’s home. It goes without saying that the entry canopy, with its massive, masonry clad, columns and wing-like, cantilevered steel canopy, begins for those entering an interesting sequence of spaces created by the lower canopy and light-filled atrium. They also noted the successful creation of facades that read like a macro-scaled mural and are economically achieved through the spirited use of three types of CMUs. Also of note is the very successful application of the canvas awnings whose size, colors and solid and striped pattern are enhanced by the scale, proportion and detailing of the supporting framework.
Merit Design Award Commercial
Atomic Credit Union
Owner: Atomic Credit Union
Architect: Tanner, Stone, Holsinger, Donges & Company
Mason Contractor: Kitts Construction
Block Producer: Portsmouth Block, Inc.

The jury awarded this project the manner in which the architect created a strong visual and formal composition through the skillful use of masonry ... in this case, a brick with a limited mix of colors and split-faced CMU of a compatible color.

Using these two materials to help articulate forms and implied levels within a mass, the architect proved that architecture that celebrates masonry materials can sometimes borrow a phrase made famous by an architect noted for steel and glass architecture, Mies van der Rohe, when he stated, “less is more.”

Merit Design Award Entertainment
Deerfield 16 Regal Cinemas
Owner: Deerfield 16 Regal Cinemas
Architect: TK Architects Inc.
Mason Contractor: J. Construction Company, Inc.
Block Producer: Wilson Concrete Products

This project impressed the jury for its exemplary design of a solution for a building typology whose esthetic expression is often relegated to a “big-box” with a fancy front and warehouse-like wall on the remainder of the building.

The architect’s design skills are evident at several scales. They start with the successful breaking down of the scale of the required volume by staggering the plan, reinforcing each corner with an ornamented pilaster and stepping down the height of the elevation of the individual cinemas contained within, thus creating a building that sits with repose on the horizon.

The jury was particularly taken with the design solution to dealing, with a very pragmatic, code-driven element, namely exit stairs from an upper level. Both side elevations reveal a very sculptural incorporation of these stairs and the canopies above them to protect them from the elements.

The jury concluded their discussion by lauding this project’s commitment to another element that seldom gets any design attention, that of well-designed, landscape development. In this project, its extensive use on the periphery, in the parking lot and immediate to the building, deserve the label “exemplary”!
2009 Award Winners

Merit Design Award Retail
Harvard Park Strip Plaza
Owner: JLP Harvard Park, LLC
Architect: Herschman Architects
Mason Contractor: Zavarella Brothers Construction Company
Block Producer: Akron Brick & Block, an Oldcastle Company

Although the front of this building will be the image mostly seen by patrons when approaching from the parking lot, it is actually what the developer and architect accomplished on the sides of this building and in the rear that convinced the jury to recognize this project with a Citation Award.

Where one would normally find a painted CMU wall, this project displays a range of CMU's and bonds that create visual interest while still gaining the cost benefits and low maintenance attributes of masonry. However, the jury felt it would be remiss if it did not also recognize the well-considered selection and placement of various bricks and the integral ornamentation achieved through the work of skilled masons throughout the building.

Merit Design Award Education
Forest Hill Community Learning Center
Owner: Akron Public Schools
Architect: GPD Group
Mason Contractor: Duer Construction
Block Producer: Akron Brick & Block, an Oldcastle Company

The jury felt very strongly in its decision to award this project. Once again, here was a project that truly celebrated the use of masonry as a family of building materials that evoke a sense of beauty, permanence, and low maintenance … all qualities that any tax-payer, school administration, or architect would agree are priorities in constructing educational facilities.

The jury was very impressed with the architect’s design skills in using traditional construction expression of masonry, such as the engaged pilasters to reinforce the rhythm of the bays and the judicious use of a lighter brick as panels in each bay that historically might have been of carved stone or terra cotta. But by far, the element that most impressed the jurors were the low arches over the large window openings, that displayed through the use of soldier courses, the high level of workmanship that is apparent throughout this project. The jury felt that they would also be remissed if it did not cite the clients sensitivity to the heritage of the historic school this one replaced and the architect’s subtle incorporation of both types of bricks used on the project in creating a frame for a beautiful piece of glazed, terra cotta art saved and reused in this building.
Award Night Photos

Host:
Tony Costello, FAIA

OMA Members and Guests Networking