The Ohio Masonry Association, completing its 57th year of masonry promotion hosted its 24th annual Award of Excellence in Masonry Design program Tuesday February 15, 2011 at the Embassy Suites, Dublin, Ohio. The evening presentation and dinner recognized nine projects for the use, design, and installation of masonry units.

Honored at the 2011 OMA Excellence in Masonry Design where 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**

**Fuchs Mizrachi School**
Owner: Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Architectural Firm: Bialosky + Partners Architects  
CMU Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

From the first run-through of project pictures, all members of the jury felt that this was a building they would be studying in more depth as the jury process unfolded. The first image that is worthy of comment is the relationship of the building to its site. The crisp forms in white and tan truly show that simplicity can be very powerful when viewing a building from afar. However, as the jury studied the building, at a much larger scale, it became apparent that this was not going to be a piece of architecture that disappoints once one actually gets close enough to view design quality at the scale that users really relate to.

In “walking around the building” ...so to speak ... it became apparent that this the architect’s mature design intellect was evident in every detail ... beginning with the juxtaposition of light, transparent elements that announce entries and give a view to the outside as students traverse between the two classroom blocks. It continues with the careful insertion of the transparent, glassed corner that interrupts the masonry clad planes, thereby reinforcing their planer quality.

We continue to the elegant glass block facade where the cantilevered canopy forms a very simple, but elegant orthogonal composition.

We conclude where the very simple, carefully proportioned and well-detailed elevation that juxtaposes the solidity of masonry with the lightweight, panel esthetic of the metal-paneled upper register and cornice again speak to a sophisticated design hand.

The jury was sorry that they could not see the flora in its mature state, although they were quick to point to the use of concrete pavers in outdoor walkways.

Lastly, the jury would be remiss not to mention that the one image of the interior ... that of the lobby speaks volumes for the level of care in the interior design, noting that CMU’s were used on the base of the reception desk. The jury felt very sure of its unanimous decision to award this project the EXCELLENCE IN MASONRY AWARD.
2011 Award Winners

Commercial Honor Design Award
The Catholic Foundation
Owner: The Catholic Foundation
Architectural Firm: Meleca Architecture
CMU Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

This project is so well executed in terms of employing a “historisist” concept for the exterior image of this building, that the jury first thought this was the restoration of a historic, Gothic Revival-styled, exterior facade. The reasons are obvious! The architect certainly studied the Gothic Style and used their findings to design a contemporary addition to a very large, glass clad, contemporary building behind. Most notable is the entry tower where buttresses and finneals frame the vertical composition.

In a certain sense, the addition has provided the client with a new “frontice-piece” whose design selection and use of masonry materials, careful detailing and exceptional craftsmanship elevates this building from the standard of a bygone era of architecture and construction techniques. Traditional elements like the base courses, pilasters, window lintels/heads, grillwork, etc. are all well considered. The stonework on the arches above the entry elevate the masons who executed them to “artisans from the old school!”

Educational Honor Design Award
North College Hill Schools
Owner: North College Hill City School District
Architectural Firm: SFA Architects Inc.
Mason Contractor: Jess Hauer Masonry
CMU Producer: Reading Rock, Inc.

From the outset, this project really impressed the jury on every account. First, the architect’s design prowess was obvious in the sophistication of how the Art Deco / Art Modern style was interpreted.

The juxtaposition of the strong vertical slab/pylons that flank the entrance interrupted at the second floor level by the continuous, streamlined/horizontal stainless steel canopy element is really beautifully handled.

The elegant flaring of this element to create a canopy at the entrance is beautifully executed.

At a much smaller scale, every situation where architects have dealt with the detailing of connections or terminations of elements, has been handled with a sure hand.

The facades of the two story, classroom elements are carefully modulated with pilaster elements and entrances treated in a manner that informs the one approaching the building … “this is where you enter!”

The Engaged columns or pilasters that end with an ornamental element is not overdone … or understated. Windows are carefully detailed … for appearance and function. The incorporation of historic artifacts that obviously speak to a predecessor building as well as the inclusion of new art and colorful interiors are also noteworthy.

What became apparent is that it is … stone, brick and CMU’s are the masonry materials that are used by the architect to achieve all of these. Without hesitation, the jury is very confident in awarding this project an HONOR AWARD.
2011 Award Winners

Commercial Merit Design Award
Basic Systems, Inc.
Owner: Cadiz Commercial Holdings
Architectural Firm: Davis Architectural Group
Mason Contractor: Lang Masonry Contractors, Inc.
CMU Producer: Oberfield's Inc.

The jury felt that this freestanding office building elevated itself above the norm for this building typology which is often informed by budget constraints. Obviously, the jury discussed the historic precedent of the Prairie Style, made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright. The horizontal massing, hip roof form with large eaves, and sitting on the landscape draw heavily upon this style. However, it is the designer’s use of masonry ... both in its colors and textures that distinguishes this building. This can be seen in the manner in which it is used to articulate the columned entry form and in the columns of the entry canopy.

It can also be seen in the way the designer chose to articulate both the head and sill at the window openings as well as the placement of the abstracted medallion in between each window, and speaks to a certain sense of permanence and investment on the part of the owner/clients. Taking all these factors into account, the jury felt strongly this building deserved a MERIT AWARD.

Public Service Merit Design Award
Argillite Fire Station & Community Center
Owner: Little Sandy Fire District
Design Firm: Eta Engineering Consultants PSC
CMU Producer: Portsmouth Block, Inc.

The jury pondered this project in terms of its design merits. However, they felt that given what seems to have become a standard for rural fire departments is to erect a pre-engineered, steel structural system and then clad it in metal siding. These look no different than many farm and industrial/warehouse structures. This is not the case with this project that uses split face CMU’s and pronounced standing-seam metal siding for the roof, as well as the fascia and soffits.

Masonry’s strength and durability over the long-haul seems to have been a very wise decision. Whereas the aforementioned stations often have both the ceilings and walls their interiors of exposed vinyl surfaced, insulated blankets easily damaged and degraded. This station has an interior that is finished with durable, washable surfaces / masonry. The above assets added up to this project earning a MERIT AWARD from the jury.
2010 Award Winners

Educational Merit Design Award
Buckeye Central K-12 School
Owner: Buckeye Central Local School District
Architectural Firm: Buehrer Group Architecture & Engineering, Inc.
Mason Contractor: Adena Corporation
CMU Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

The jury felt that the major strength of this project was its use of simple geometric forms in both plan and elevation that created a building of laudable design quality. It noted that this represented a wise set of design decisions on the part of the architect as the design of school buildings is almost always informed by budget constraints that require the spending of money in a manner that gives tax payers the most for the public money spent.

Two examples of this was the use of the stone-veneered entry gable that gives visual orientation to the visitor and also elevates the entry as an important architectural element, certainly a decision with historic precedent.

The jury also noted that the use of the single arched-in-plan element was most likely a major public space such as a resource center or student lounge, thus justifying its unique plan configuration. Lastly, the architects lauded the use of concrete masonry as an interior finish material that took advantage of its range of unit offerings and its many qualities such as durability and easy maintenance. In summary, the jury felt secure in its decision to award this building a MERIT AWARD.

Retail Merit Design Award
Turkey Hill
Owner: Turkey Hill
Architectural Firm: Ford + Associates
CMU Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

When the jury looked at the first picture, it did not initially comprehend that this was a piece of “legitimate architecture” applied to a building type that most often is the stepchild of the giant canopy over the multiple gas pumps. Once that point became clear, they applauded the architect’s site planning of placing the building up on a widened sidewalk of what appears to be a main intersection. This is indeed a real testimony to the designer’s understanding of urban design principals that reinforce the pedestrian sidewalk. Note: The bicycle racks did not escape the jury’s eye, and reinforced the previous statement. However, the facade that faces the station lot gets equal treatment plus the obligatory bollards. The issue that elicited the greatest amount of debate centered on the obvious use of a “style” that is derived from another form of transportation ... namely, the railroad. However, they did agree that the train station analogy was very well handled and beautifully detailed.

However, the building in the background of one photograph informed the jury that this project may well be located in a historic district with a “design code” that informs the design of new buildings. The project use of landscaping led the jury to compliment the developer and architect for the strong commitment to the overall development of the entire site... with masonry playing a major role. Even if driven by code requirements, it is nevertheless, very laudable. What started with a question ... ended with the jury feeling very secure in awarding this project a MERIT AWARD. “Fill’r UP!”
Residential Merit Design Award
DeNisco Townhouse
Owner: Anthony and Barbara DeNisco
CMU Producer: Wayne Builders Supply

The jury was impressed with this project in that it represents a very well-considered adaptive reuse of a historic building … most likely a bank building built around 1900 in the Classical Revival Style. Well-done cleaning and restoration of the beautifully-carved limestone on the street facade. It also represents the very positive movement in the revitalization of our older cities, namely the reintroduction to downtown living.

However, it is at the rear of the building that the design prowess of the architect is demonstrated with a sensitive, two story addition that incorporates a wonderful logia, reminiscent of those found in many Italian villas that over look the countryside.

The jury lauded the use of concrete masonry paving units on the driveway which serves to integrate the building and rear courtyard. Split-face CMU’s carry out the pallet of masonry materials and provide for a contemporary interpretation of the rusticated stone often found on the lower register of historic buildings. They also work well as a balustrade for the logia. The jury assumed that issues of weight prevented masonry from being used on the upper register. For all of the above, the jury felt this building was deserving of a MERIT AWARD.

Retail Merit Design Award
The Plaza at South Park
Owner: The Plaza at South Park
Architectural Firm: Dorsky + Yue International LLC
CMU Producer: Oberfield’s Inc.

The jury felt this project was worthy of an award primarily on the strength of its use of four major masonry materials ... brick, ground-face CMU’s, as well a natural and cast stone.. in such a manner as to add a sense of quality and permanence in a building typology that often conveys the image of disposable / “spec-architecture”

This is especially true on what is referred to as “Big Box” retail where the detailing of several other material systems and masonry a carefully considered.

Another discussion point centered on the architect’s use of this mix of masonry materials in a manner that they have been historically used ... such as the base of a building, horizontal banding to create a more human scale wall and at the cornice. This is also apparent at a much larger scale, as evident in facade of the “Big Box” element, and in the manner in which they reinforce the architects manipulation of the masses to articulate individual stores.

Lastly, the investment in masonry even on the rear / service facade reinforced the point made earlier ... that of investing in quality instead of having the pro forma’s “bottom line” drive all design decisions. The jury certainly believes all of the above warrants this project receiving a Merit Award.
2011 Award Winners

Tony Costello, FAIA
Jury Chairperson

DeNisco Townhouse

Basic Systems

The Catholic Foundation

The Plaza at South Park

Turkey Hill

North College Hill Schools

Buckeye Central K-12 School

Argillite Fire Station & Community Center

Fuchs Mizrachi School

Awards Dinner Attendees

Ohio Masonry Association
P.O. Box 130
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