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Designs to Nurture the Human Spirit

14. APR, 2010

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Fernando Brave's Houston architecture firm is about creating spaces where the human spirit can be nurtured and transformed.

Their work might take the shape of a library, a women's shelter, a gallery or a blog. What matters most to them is the process of discovery, usually followed by the end result. Predictably, budgets often fall in line behind concepts.

"I like to create spaces where people learn, grow and discover things," he said. "It's good for us to do projects that do a lot for people – to create spaces where activities are intense for what they mean – where people learn from growing personally."

He points to an 8,000 square foot, non-profit shelter to house women in Baytown, on the edge of Houston, as a prime example. The New Horizons Family Center was finished a year ago, and even with a challenging budget, managed to please client and architects alike. "One of our goals is to enjoy the project," he said. The center earned recognition from the local AIA with an award in 2009.

Budgets are important, but not the center of attention. "I don't think that more budget equals a better project," he said. "But I do think that an adequate budget and conscious work equals a good project. I try to respond to client needs and the environment with sensible answers."

His firm, Brave/Architecture created its own blog a few years back. They call it Brave/Praxis. "It's a parking lot of ideas," he said. "We use it as a place to show things that are part of the subconscious process for architecture – the flow of things that feed the process."

The blog features "Pics of the Week" of projects and the environment, as well as fashion and music. "The product is what we're working on, but I'm interested in the process. I don't start on a project – I start on a process. It's not about fabricating stuff, but about discovering things and concepts."

And it's a team-building exercise for the firm. "Here, everybody feeds it by building and sharing. There are a lot of connections outside, then feedback and responses. It allows everybody to pitch in with something personal."

One can't help but think that if Carl Jung were around today, this would be his kind of design firm.

For more on Brave/Architecture, go to www.bravearchitecture.com



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