

FACES IN THE CROWD

# Architect devoted to creating spaces for nonprofits

■ Fernando Brave's firm develops area YMCA projects

By ARLENE NISSON LASSIN  
CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

SPACE architecture first drew native Argentinian Fernando Brave to Houston and even though he abandoned that field of architecture, the city has become his home.

"In 1997, I applied to the University of Houston for a master's degree program in space architecture," Brave said. "I never practiced that type of architecture, but I just wanted to add another angle to my background."

A native of Buenos Aires, Brave studied architecture for six years at that city's Universidad de Belgrano and received his bachelor's degree in 1986.

He received his master's degree from the University of Houston in December 1988 and received his licenses from the American Institute of Architects in 1993.

Brave opened Brave/Architecture, 4617 Montrose Blvd., in 2002, after working for two Houston-based firms. He quickly had to bring another architect on board and five years later, has expanded his staff to 10 architects.

Although his company takes on all types of projects for individuals and companies, Brave has found a niche — designing community spaces.

"I didn't set out to do this but find this type of architecture is rewarding," Brave said. "The dynamics of working with a community-driven project with nonprofits and their committees is exciting to me because we develop the project together, as a part of a design team. I enjoy this type of interaction."

His first community project was the Alief Family YMCA, 7850 Howell-Sugarland Road, in 2003. He now works on several YMCA projects throughout the Greater Houston area.

The firm's most recent proj-



DAVE ROSSMAN: FOR THE CHRONICLE

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Fernando Brave's firm received awards in architecture at the 2005 AIA Houston Design Awards and the 2005 Texas Society of Architects Design Awards for its work with De Santos Gallery, 1724 Richmond Ave.

ect was a women's shelter in Baytown. Brave became so committed to the New Horizon Family Center and its importance that he donated time and materials when the nonprofit's funds ran short.

"A pleasant, warm and welcoming environment was needed for this client," Brave said. "This is for women seeking shelter and a respite. Their available budget was not enough for their needs, so I provided my services and other services and in-kind materials to complete the project."

Brave estimates he donated \$85,000 worth of planning work for New Horizon's courtyard, a master plan and landscape design, and he has decided to continue donating a

portion of his services to nonprofits when there is a need.

Brave's firm was selected from among 23 architecture firms for the project by Joyce Young, former director of the New Horizon Family Center.

"He sincerely cares about his clients, and he really cared about this project," Young said. "He absolutely had our best interests at heart."

Brave is in his third year as a design studio professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston. He also serves on the board of the Rice Design Alliance.

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## FERNANDO BRAVE

■ Age: 46

■ Occupation: Architect

■ Community connection: Owner of Brave/Architecture, 4617 Montrose Blvd.

■ Fast fact: After studying architecture at Universidad de Belgrano in Buenos Aires and receiving a bachelor's degree in 1986, he earned a master's degree from the University of Houston in 1988.

■ Quick quote: "The dynamics of working with a community-driven project with nonprofits and their committees is exciting to me because we develop the project together as a part of a design team. I enjoy this type of interaction."

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This past year, Brave and his

brother, Alejandro Brave, also an architect, opened an office of Brave Architecture in Buenos Aires, managed by Alejandro.