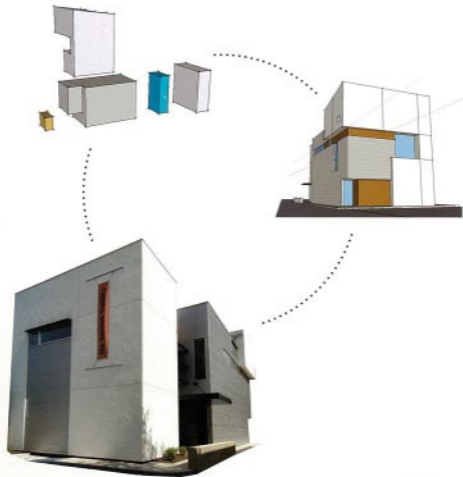


# TexasArchitect

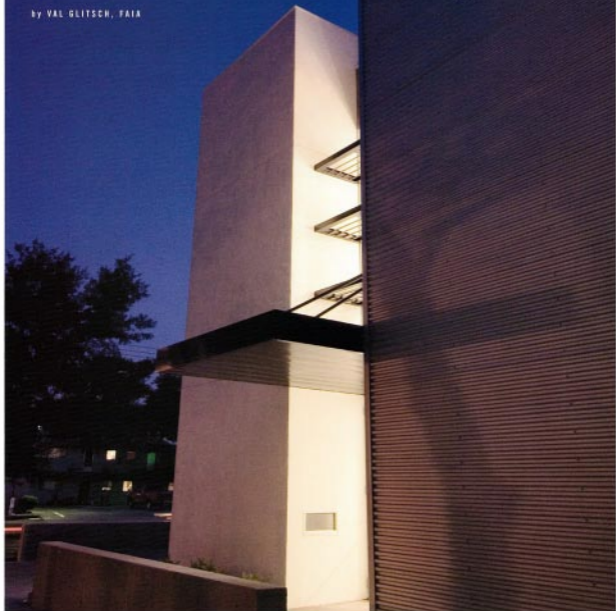
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005



TSA DESIGN AWARDS 2005

# De Santos Gallery

by VAL GLITSCH, FAIA





INTEGRATING art into the life of a community often requires its separation from the everyday. Experiencing that separation makes viewing the artful object possible in its own place: a space filled with only its own sound. *Brave/Architecture's* new project for the De Santos Gallery is such a place, a building insulated from the busy urban street along which it sits.

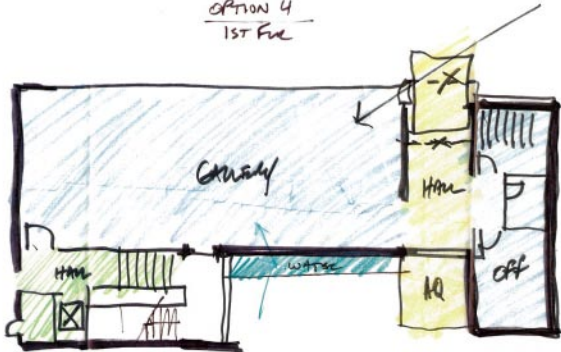
An early sketch of the floor plan (see next page) shows the architect's intention to close the building to the street, revealing only glimpses of the contents rather than exposing too much to the public. "This is purposely done to gradually awaken the intellectual curiosity of the visitor," says Fernando Brave, AIA. The entry space, publicly accessible from the east, is flanked by two outdoor areas that accommodate overflow during openings. Visually expanding the dimensions of the interior space, these provide a shady, cool welcome.

Services are situated along the west side, shielding public spaces from the strong light and heat. Introducing a reflecting pool along the west gallery's edge accentuates the sensory experience in a private patio while allowing indirect sunlight to bounce into the gallery through low windows, permitting full-width flexibility for hanging art at the proper viewing height.

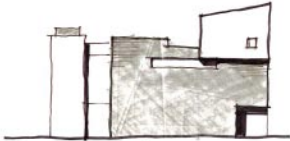
The second-floor plan works almost the same way. A circulation spine edges a large studio (sometimes used as additional gallery space) and aligns services on the west side of building, continuing the light and heat buffer vertically. A void over the lobby visually connects the two main interior spaces via a bridge.

**PROJECT** De Santos Gallery  
**CLIENT** Luis A. De Santos  
**ARCHITECT** *Brave/Architecture*  
**DESIGN TEAM** Fernando L. Brave, AIA, Terence J. Neenan, Alejandro Bravo  
**CONTRACTOR** Vivus Construction  
**CONSULTANTS** Mable Structural Engineers (Structural), James Engineering (MEP), Anna Bruce (Interior)  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** Foster + Handberg

OPTION 4  
1ST FLOOR



EAST 'A'



EAST 'B'



At the top, a third-floor roof deck, adjacent to the living/rest space and hidden from a street perspective, allows a survey of the neighborhood from a safe distance where city noise is reduced and cars appear pleasantly diminished.

Elevation sketches (opposite page) reveal how the exterior evolved to reinforce the intentionally private nature of the building. They also illustrate how the massing developed from a single-material silhouette shaped by internal requirements to become more carved, losing its earlier flatness. As built, vertical and horizontal elements interact as the inside pushes outward. Still, the exterior remains minimalist, a simple palette of stucco and metal siding. Sheet metal expresses the accessibility of public spaces, while ornament stucco signifies the private areas impenetrable by the public. One needs a "over-intellectualize it to understand it," Brave says.

Brave credits the owners with much of the project's success. "They knew what they wanted," he says, "but they didn't tell me how to do it." Obviously on the same page architecturally, owner and architect orchestrated the result, and experiencing the building reveals that the permanent art is the building. ■

Yui Gikaku, FAIA, practices architecture in Houston.

**DESIGNER:** YUI GIKAKU; **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** M&C; **CONCRETE FORMS:** James Kurlak; **TRUCK:** Duffile; **PAVING:** ICI, Pratt & Lambert, Cabot; **STAINED CONCRETE:** M&C; **STAIN:** Unique Concrete Technologies, Inc.; **WATERGARDEN POND:** Nelson Water Gardens & Nursery; **CEILING LIGHTING FIXTURES:** Inroco Lighting; **CONCRETE MATERIALS:** Waco Composites, Inc.; **PLUMBING FIXTURES:** Kohler/American Standard