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DEPARTMENTS

In this month's archrecord2, it's all about the brand. For today's young firms, working with branding means more than littering our architectural landscape with logos and billboards. It means innovative architecture that reflects the values of a company—and brings the public into those spaces. Two firms show how it's done properly, one in Los Angeles and one in New York. Tune in online to Design, Work, Live, and Talk, where forums now let you speak your mind.

Design

M(Arch): Brands and the built environment



Two architects and a strategic-marketing professional walk into a building. This time, however, it's no joke. Architect Todd Erlandson, AIA, and marketing guru Sherry Hoffman (center and right in photo, left), principals of Los Angeles-based architecture and branding firm (M)Arch, and (M)Arch project

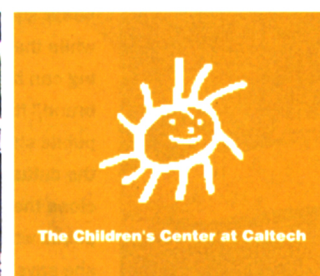
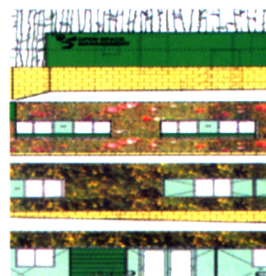
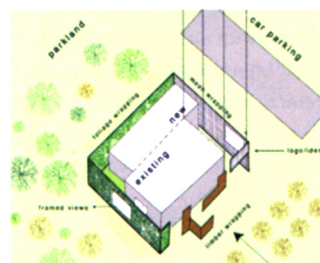
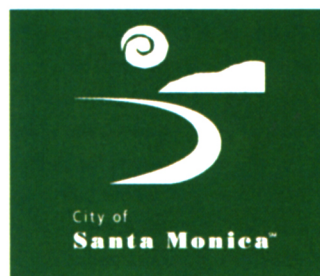
architect Laura Hoad (far left in photo), have structured their firm into what could be a significant niche in the business of architecture. While some architects might scoff at a firm that puts its own star power aside to focus solely on a company or community's identity, these three are happy to concentrate on creating a holistic brand experience for clients that includes good design as part of the strategy, and keeps their egos out of the picture. "Becoming stars is the antithesis of who we are," says Erlandson, who has worked for Richard Meier & Partners and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and teaches a course about branding and architecture with Hoffman at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. "We are focused on creating significant work, not signature work."

To these three, creating significant work means defining a company's values, and maximizing those values into a built environment, whether it be for a corporate headquarters, a preschool, a city, or a dental office. "Our goal is to translate the values of a company or community into architecture," says Hoffman, whose experience includes marketing positions at Young & Rubicam and Universal Studios. "Companies want to communicate their identity, and their physical environment can do that for them."

The 5-to-8 person firm, which began in 1998, has worked for such varied California clients as HBO Films, hip Los Angeles department store Fred Segal, and the City of Santa Monica. The (M)Arch team believes that buildings are important vehicles for

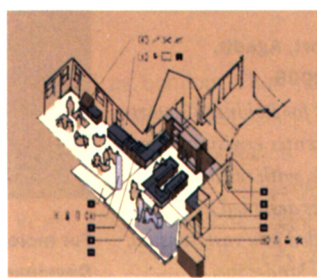
Clover Park, Santa Monica, Calif., 2002

Landscape and cladding communicate the city's identity and aesthetically blend new and existing office trailers into a lush public park.



The Children's Center at CalTech, Pasadena, Calif., 2007

A 600-square-foot arts and sciences lab for university preschool that reflects CalTech's culture.





Fred Segal Beauty, Santa Monica, Calif., 2007

Six-thousand-square-foot salon, spa, and retail space for L.A. beauty trendsetter.

communicating a message. "We offer a creative business strategy for our clients that encourages them to define who they are," says Erlandson. "The strategy applies to different areas of design, including logos, business cards, Web sites, and more, so we'll collaborate with graphic professionals to create the other material for a client. And context is everything. We pay attention to how this brand fits into the community in a meaningful way. We want to create something that will make a difference, expose the process, and give people a connection to a hot place."

And connecting with the public means designing structures that are more than boxes covered in logos and signage. "Brands are creating the landscapes of our cities," says Erlandson. "If we, as architects, don't step up and get into it, what will happen to our built environment?" *Ingrid Spencer*

For more information on these and other projects by (M)Arch, visit archrecord.construction.com/archrecord2/.

Klingmann Architecture Brand Development



Anna Klingmann, principal of Klingmann Architecture Brand Development, has just finished a book about architecture and branding called *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy* (MIT Press, 2007). The architect and educator, who transplanted herself to New York City from Germany many years ago, is raring to bring her expertise to the American marketplace. Having formally started her company in 2004, her clients have been exclusively European—German-based Robinson Resorts;

the City of Halle, Germany; and competitions for clients such as Adidas and the City of Prague. "I'm excited to work where I live," says Klingmann, "and I see the potential here, as real estate developers and corporations in recent years are realizing that good design can enhance the value of their brands."

While Klingmann's firm consists of about 3-to-4 people at any one time, she relies on collaborations with a network of professionals around the globe to accomplish the total package that a branding effort requires for a client. "We do the architecture and the master planning," she says. "We try to see the brand in a conceptual way. Not as a product, but as a catalyst—a strategic tool. We bring logic to the table, and magic."

Klingmann emphasizes that it's the values of the company that need to be shared with the public through architecture, and while that means that the building can help employees "live the brand," it also means that the public should be brought into the culture. "Corporations often close themselves off from the public with their architecture," she says. "That's an opportunity

Oasis Resort, Agadir, Morocco, 2008

This project for Robinson Resorts contains a center envisioned as a lively souk, with residential communities designed as quiet villages nestled in a vast, sensual, and colorful landscape.



Audi Flyer, various cities, unbuilt



Flexible boutique spaces in urban areas would encourage exposure to the Audi brand.

lost. If clients have public spaces that create a physical experience for people, then architecture can serve a powerful role in communicating. By fencing themselves off, they create a feeling of distrust."

As an educator, Klingmann knows that brandism is still not quite accepted as a viable way to go about the business of architecture. "Academia is so concerned with 'shape making' that it often ignores the relevance of content," she says. "Architecture is more than just creating a cool object. It can make economic impact, improve a depressed area, and communicate a long-term strategy. We visit certain places because they are unique, so as the world becomes smaller, it's important that architects keep it from becoming homogenized." *J.S.*



Kunsthalle Rebranding Study, Halle, Germany, 2004

To rebrand a derelict district of the city, Klingmann proposed turning it into a living urban sculpture park where a culturally attractive environment would create new economic opportunities.



For more photos and projects by Klingmann Architecture Brand Development, go to archrecord.construction.com/archrecord2/.