



Cranbrook connection: The architectural firm of Perkins, Wheeler & Will collaborated with Eliel and Eero Saarinen on the design of Crow Island School in Willmette, Ill. It bears a similarity to Perkins & Will's new Troy High.

Troy High

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a high school in Santa Fe, N.M., an elementary school in El Paso, Texas, and now the 284,000-square-foot Troy High School.

Demographics provided change

According to Bill Brubaker, Perkins & Will vice chairman, changing demographics has initiated the need for new school construction across the country. But once the need has been established, the design of a new school plays a paramount role in the educational process. It's not simply a matter of supplying demand, but creating a physical plant that will best satisfy the educational needs of the students in a meaningful learning environment.

How then did Perkins & Will attempt to design a school that acts

in the best interests of 1,600 students?

The site consists of 71 acres, 10 of which have been left undisturbed to create a balance between the high school and its natural surroundings. Within the 284,000-square-foot structure, a congruity is established in the floor plan with a major corridor axis serving as a connector for the minor axes that lead to three areas of instructional activity: academic, physical education and art.

Entering the high school on a circular driveway of Northfield Parkway, a fan-shaped, 750-seat theater with a semi-circular glass-enclosed lobby comes into view. The 62-foot high overstage structure make the theater the first notable part of the complex. Adjacent is a narrow rectangular three-story masonry tower that serves to mark the entrance of the high school. This is a popular architectural motif often used by Perkins & Will on many of their educational buildings and can be

traced back to a similar tower at Crow Island.

Light story

The entrance vestibule, adjacent to the office, is immersed in light from clerestory windows and circular light wells. The high school takes full advantage of indirect light with similar window arrangements particularly in the library where the play of light from the clerestory windows highlights the curvilinear walls. The bookshelves in the library are illuminated with tall vertical windows, further enhancing the literary resources of the high school. Natural light is considered a source that uplifts the human experience and will play a role in the learning environment of Troy High School.

What is particularly noteworthy about the high school is the func-

tional, geometric clarity of its architectural form that characterizes 20th century modern architecture. Such a quality has stylistic antecedents that date back not only to Crow Island School in Waukegan but earlier at the Bauhaus in Germany where function was at the core of their curriculum.

The interplay of exterior wall planes of the building are further defined with the horizontal lines of flat white brick. The building as a whole is an interplay of form and space in which this educational facility synergistically interacts with the surrounding community rather than being self-contained and distant.

The high school also physically symbolizes the many directions that education must pursue, open to new ideas as well as projecting into the 21st century.

Dale Northup is a professor of architectural history.

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Designers instill humor in furniture

(AP) Wit and whimsy reigned at the recent International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York.

The trade show at the Javits Center, now in its fourth year, has become a magnet for furniture makers working on the edge and for small design-oriented companies.

For the bedroom, Aris Paganakis created a bed, vanity mirror, chest and bedside table of maple with cherry trim and red edging of aniline dye. Oddly rounded, they look as if they were reflections in a fun-house mirror. No wonder. They were inspired by the illustrations of Dr. Seuss, says Paganakis, a woodworker in Easton, Pa.

My designs begin with a whimsical approach," he says. Out of the corner of your eye, you can see my bombe chest design. To add fun, I drench my work in color."

Jonathan and Nicole Goldman of GoldmanArts in Boston turned slipcovers for folding chairs into fanciful creatures vaguely resembling

dinosaurs. Pointy scales of ripstop nylon run down the back of their Hairy Chair Covers." The covers come in bright colors with contrasting scales."

Their Rose Table" is a conversational piece. The top of a small rectangular table is a window box filled with red fabric roses. When an electric fan hidden below is off, the flowers droop, as if parched. When it is on, they perk up and sway gently in the breeze.

Jeff Crews and Jane Corbus of Amazing Wind Machines Inc., in Littleton, Mass., create wind sculptures. These droll figures with propeller mechanisms and moving parts, are powered indoors by a fan or outdoors by the wind. Designs include an oarsman in a boat, a snapping lobster and a dog wagging its tail. Each piece measures from 15 to 27 inches long and comes with a display stand.

The furniture Harry Segal designs looks like makeovers from the Sal-

vation Army. That from Amy and Christopher Clavelli actually is reclaimed and refurbished cast-offs.

Segal, of Harry Art Furniture and Design of Los Angeles, spills up his overstuffed seating and chrome dinette sets with lavish fabrics, bright colors and shiny finishes. The styles were borrowed from the 1920s through the 1950s. The colors, though, are definitely the '90s.

A lot of people are afraid of color," says Segal, a darling of some of the Hollywood film crowd. But I use it to transform funky old designs and make them contemporary."

The Clavellis, of Clavelli Designs in Brooklyn, N.Y., create second-hand shops, garage sales, even dumps, then bring their finds home and repaint them in fanciful colors and patterns.

We work on pieces like those which many designers in their 30s grew up with," says Christopher Clavelli, an actor turned furniture painter. My mother threw them out,

my father hates them. We're giving them a second life by painting them."

The Clavellis also will redo privately-owned pieces. In fact, they prefer it because finding old furniture isn't easy.

We just got a large order for chairs, and I don't have enough and don't know where I'll find more," Clavelli says.

The Shakers are a quite sober sect, but there's a quiet humor in the Shaker-like cabinets and tables designed by Marcus Santoro and Janice Melone of Santoro Melone, New Haven, Conn. The maple pieces are simplicity itself. The complexity is in the surface treatment — usually a collage on the exterior finish or hidden in a drawer.

A nice thing about humor is that it has no age limit. At 66, Eva Zeisel is most likely the oldest designer in the show.

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