

Notes from the Bureau

NEW DESIGN PROJECTS



Rocksalt restaurant

A Seafront Salvation

In the small harbor of Folkestone, England, Rocksalt restaurant introduces a fresh approach to dining through thoughtful design

On paper, Rocksalt restaurant appears completely out of context. As a fine-dining hot spot housed in a strikingly elegant building, it would seem more suited to London than a decayed ferry-port town. Yet the restaurant anchors Folkestone's regeneration, which is remaking the town into a seaside destination.

Behind Rocksalt's elegant architecture is Guy Hollaway, principal of Guy Hollaway Architects. "We won the competition because we really pulled out all the stops," says Hollaway. "The building is very contemporary in resolve but [also] very understanding about context and place. It reconnects Folkestone to the sea, and because it was the first piece of the jigsaw, it was very important that its design hit the ground running."

Hollaway paid acute attention to implicit details, but "the temptation was to do something overpowering," he admits.

"Our greatest success was doing what we set out to do at the start: to make a restaurant that re-engages with the sea and with the town, while also making architecture that can stand out and create a destination."

—GUY HOLLAWAY

DESIGNING A KITCHEN

Gareth Sefton knows his way around a kitchen. After all, he designs them. Boasting a roster that includes clients like upscale One & Only resorts and Mandarin Oriental hotels, Sefton brought his mad design skills to Rocksalt using the cuisine to guide his design. "It was designed with large weighting toward fish and seafood," he says. Sefton worked with the chef and co-owner of Rocksalt to create a kitchen that is not only functional, but beautiful, as well.

"But the building is ultimately about understanding place, so the 'wow' factor had to come from the view and surroundings." The restaurant itself angles over the harbor and looks toward France across the English Channel. Outside, sandblasted black-timber cladding blends the structure in with its adjacent buildings, while inside, floor-to-ceiling picture windows provide panoramic sea views. A curved ceiling not only accentuates this view but also ties into the curve of the building, which, Hollaway says, "reminds you of the curve of a fish belly." The architect finished the fine-dining space, located on the ground floor, in rich greens and browns as a subtle nod to the colors of the sea floor. Upstairs, lighter blues, grays, and whites connect the bar and terrace to the natural colors of the sky. Minimal artwork adorns the interior because, explains Hollaway, "it would take away from the experience of how the atmosphere changes." Even the lighting fixtures are subtly detailed. "The lighting elements remind you of lobster pots, but they don't look like lobster pots—they're just understated enough."

Ultimately, Hollaway feels most proud that he adhered to his original vision for Rocksalt's design. "Our greatest success was doing what we set out to do at the start: to make a restaurant that re-engages with the sea and with the town, while also making architecture that can stand out and create a destination," he says. "This is the first restaurant I've done of this nature, and I would absolutely do it again in the future." With many projects still to be built in the masterplan, Hollaway may just fulfill his wish with another restaurant at Folkestone. ♡

BY KATHRYN FREEMAN RATHBONE

PHOTOS BY PAUL FREEMAN

Designing for College

Steinberg Architects is out to modernize the architecture associated with education—one classroom at a time

Can a wall teach you calculus? Could a scone recite Byron? Unless this is a Disney film, probably not; but according to Italian educational innovator Loris Malaguzzi, physical space can be as powerful an educator as an actual teacher. He calls the environment the "third teacher," after adults and peers.

Fox Technology Center

**GREEN FEATURES AT FOX**

Since Steinberg's firm is committed to sustainability, the Fox Technology center is finished with green design features throughout. Natural light streaming in from the floor-to-ceiling windows lights the circulation spaces. Rainwater collected on the grounds and roof of the building is naturally filtered and seeps into the group water.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

Devcon Construction is quite familiar with Steinberg Architects. They've worked with the firm multiple times, including on the Bellarmine College Preparatory Humanities Building and Academic Building in San Jose. Andy Schatzman of Devcon says it's all due in part to a healthy relationship. "We had a very good working relationship with Steinberg Architects for both projects."

More than 70 years after his revolutionary educational theory, the design of the West Valley College Fox Technology Center in Saratoga, California recalls the spirit and lessons of Malaguzzi's third teacher. Designed by Rob Steinberg of Steinberg Architects, the building mixes social and learning spaces by incorporating courtyards and study corridors for informal learning, as well as traditional classrooms decked out with the latest technology.

For all its modern touches, the firm had the challenge of fitting the new structure in with the dark browns and unwelcoming nature of older campus buildings. Instead of mimicking that behind-the-times style, they drew inspiration from the campus' oak trees. "Our basic philosophy is that buildings on a campus should work with the scale and palette of the place, but be truly original in design that is reflective of our times," says Steinberg, principal at his namesake firm.

"Our transparent society and Facebook generation are out there to see and be seen, and our campus design recognizes this and tries to open themselves, reaching out to the students." ❖

BY ALYSSA MEZA

PHOTOS BY TIM GRIFFITH

**Seasons Senior Living**

Nardi Associates was tasked with building a safe haven for senior citizens in the Los Angeles ghetto. Was the design a success?

The concept was simple: design and build an affordable housing complex to serve senior citizens with developmental disabilities and a limited-income, as well as other seniors caring for those with special needs. "People with all kinds of physical or mental limitations were going to be occupying this space," says Norberto Nardi, principal at Nardi Associates, LLP. "So our design needed to be very clear, very well organized, allowing people to orient themselves throughout the project without barriers."

Additionally, the commissioning group, Linc Housing Corporation, also wanted Seasons to be sustainable, with a goal of gold or platinum LEED certification.

But it wasn't that simple. The site was to be split between the city of Compton and the county of LA, forcing the architect to negotiate and satisfy the requirements of two governmental organizations. "We were affected by modifications from both jurisdictions, so it was quite a challenge to harmonize those without losing the project's integrity," Nardi says.

Keeping costs low while creating a sustainable environment was also an issue, not to mention the fact that Compton is the crime capital of California. "It's been getting better, but when you say 'Compton' in Southern California, everybody knows what you are talking about."

"The site is self-contained enough that it provides safety to the users without turning the project into a prison-like design." —NORBERTO NARDI

A third challenge was building an aesthetically appealing complex that provided easy access for developmentally disabled residents, while still complying with ADA standards. And above all other concerns, Seasons needed to be a place where people would want to live. "The architecture needed to be festive," Nardi says. "I wanted it to be happy."

Nardi started solving problems almost as soon as he began conceptualizing the design. "We wanted to establish a very clear layout without being simplistic or too predictable,"

he says. “Hopefully the layout would be a little surprising, but it would also keep a sense of orientation—a connection and flow from place to place.”

Season’s site plan focuses on simple and logical movement from building to building, with a courtyard design and limited access points to improve safety. “The site design incorporated what we call ‘defensible architecture,’ which means it is self-contained enough that it provides safety to the users without turning the project into a prison-like design,” Nardi says.

The focus on a sustainable design is also noticeable. White roofs reduce the absorption of the California sun, while drought resistant plants from around the region dot the premises, and energy modeling helps dictate future design decisions.

And details like an outdoor courtyard and the avoidance of double-loaded corridors create a pleasant living environment, which in turn leads to tenants filling Seasons. “The use of the colors, the presence of light, the different sounds of the place; all of these details result in a happy environment,” Nardi says.

So, does Nardi think the development is a success? “Absolutely. You know how I know that I succeeded? Because people are moving in. People are coming to the place.”

BY NOAH DAVIS

PHOTO BY FARYHA MAJUMDER

Atlas Architects

Two Salt Lake City Architects reinvent elementary school design with smart, sustainable (and sometimes silly) style

Whether your memories of school days are happy or hellacious, almost all of us had to soldier through the aesthetics of institutional design: cinder-block walls, linoleum floors, and a tone-deaf approach to how design impacts daily life.

Atlas Architects principals Jesse Hulse and Jason Foster, and landscape architect Peter Beeton, have completed two Utah charter school projects using novel tactics to reinvent schoolhouse design: the Early Light Academy in South Jordan, Utah features a fallow field that Beeton transformed into a maze for the children to play in during recess. The firm also used Lego-like colored glass windows of varying sizes to animate



Early Light Academy



Weilenmann School of Discovery



the building’s façade. And at Park City’s Weilenmann School of Discovery, a dual purpose “cafetorium” features large glass garage doors that open to the outside for easy outdoors access.

“The real clients you’re working for are these kids,” Foster says. “If you get a kid who really likes the place that they’re in, they’re going to want to go to school.”

Here, they give us their thoughts on the good, bad, and ugly design of elementary educational facilities.

What were the hallmarks of bad design you remember from your school days?

HULSE: I remember schools in the ‘70s that had low ceilings due to energy codes and very few windows—dark, foreboding classrooms.

FOSTER: Acres of lawn that really had no purpose. Or if it wasn’t a large sea of lawn, it was a large sea of asphalt.

Do you think the emphasis on design in these charter schools signals a shift of priorities in how Americans see education?

HULSE: I think the opportunity to look at school design from a fresh approach goes hand in hand with the charter-school movement of more local control and individual expression in schools.

“The real clients you’re working for are these kids. If you get a kid who really likes the place that they’re in, they’re going to want to go to school.” —JASON FOSTER, ATLAS

One of the great things about children is they don’t really have any inhibitions about space. Have there been any instances where students have interacted in a way you didn’t anticipate?

HULSE: We like to use Interface carpet tiles because they are so sustainably minded, and we like to mix the colors up in a random palette. And I saw one student using them as sort of a game, kind of hopping from one color to the next.

FOSTER: On the Weilenmann school, we did kind of an unusual window arrangement. I was walking along the back of the school where this puzzle of windows runs along. And it was totally amazing to me to see how kids really gravitated to them. They were embracing this element that we tried to introduce that’s a little bit whimsical.

BY FELICIA FEASTER

PHOTO OF EARLY LIGHT ACADEMY BY CODY BENSON / PHOTOS OF WEILENMANN SCHOOL OF DISCOVERY COURTESY ATLAS ARCHITECTS