

Now that's getting into your work

The architects of Team Haas liked this renovation project so much they moved in

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Sometimes it's what an architect doesn't do when renovating a building that is the really important design decision.

Team Haas Architects let a Spartan 1950s five-story office building at 11th Street and San Jacinto Boulevard be what it wanted to be. No camouflage, no disguise.

But what the firm did do was effectively pop open the boxy building and crown it with a new glass and metal sixth floor. The result is a more transparent, more lively and ultimately more urbane structure.

The project won the Austin firm a 2001 honor award recently from the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the third year in row Team Haas has won the highest of the annual awards.

"We were simply true to the building," says Stan Haas, principal of the firm. "It had good 1950s bones and we just expanded on that."

Once owned by the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization and last occupied by a gubernatorial campaign, the cream-colored brick building had to be brought up to code, which meant installing new elevators and wheelchair-accessible restrooms on each floor. Rather than use existing space, the architects grouped the new features in a 15-foot-wide extension to the windowless east side of the building. The extension is clad in dark concrete panels that contrast with the existing building's light brick — a contrast that enhances the original building, rather than competes with it.

To bring more light to inside offices, the narrow strip windows on the main facade, which had awkwardly high sills, were enlarged and reglazed. To control the intense sunlight, tiers of new steel sunshades were added. Providing still more natural light, a grid of new windows was punched through the formerly windowless north and south sides.

Also heightening the new sense of transparency is the new glass and metal sixth floor, which the architects took up to the height limit set by the Capitol view corridor ordinance. A notched balcony on the northwest corner offers an outstanding view of the Capitol.

Haas said the design team directed its efforts toward creating something sympathetic to the vernacular mid-century modernism of the original structure. "We really liked the building to begin with," Haas said. "Why would we wreck it?"

In fact, the firm liked the building so much it relocated there, leasing about one-third of the fourth floor to create a 3,500-square-foot studio. The design of the finished space netted the firm a merit award from this year's AIA competition.

In effect, Team Haas' office is an inhabited portfolio — one in which the architects' ideas and favorite materials are on display. "I think of our office as our calling card," Haas said.

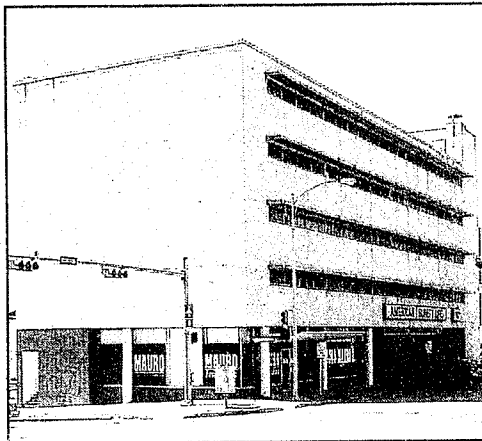
That calling card might read: Good, quality materials and design, but still kind of edgy — a keen sense of geometry, but with some humor and fun.

Team Haas assembled a veritable catalog of



Team Haas Architects photos

Team Haas Architects took an ordinary 1950s five-story office building, below, and turned it into an award-winning six-story celebration of light and transparency, above.



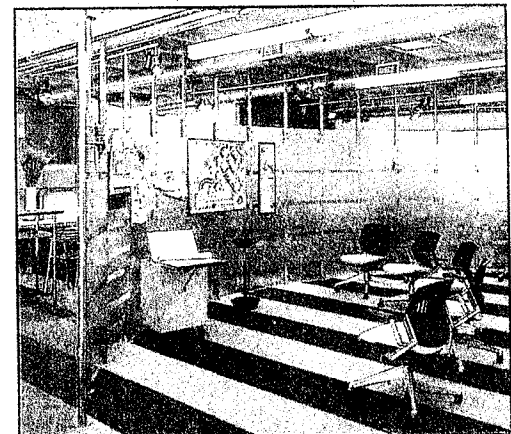
Dialogue

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2001 AIA winners

Team Haas Architects
1011 San Jacinto

Stan Haas



Paul Bardagay

Perforated aluminum panels form a curving metal screen that displays drawings and also separates off the presentation space.

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