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VICTOR F. "TREY" TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE

The formal award ceremony for what has come to be known internationally as America's highest architecture honor will be held during the 2020-2021 American Architecture Awards at Art Basel in Miami on December 2, 2021.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA (November 15, 2021) — Victor F. "Trey" Trahan III has been selected as this year's Laureate of The American Prize for Architecture by both The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies.

The 61-year-old Trahan is an architect based in New Orleans. He becomes the 10th Laureate of the American Prize for Architecture.

With precision and dexterity, Trahan and his firm have built a solid portfolio of award-winning projects across a wide range of building types and scales, including corporate, cultural, performing arts, religious, ecological, master planning, academic, and mixed-use projects.

The firm has produced work throughout the U.S. and internationally on five continents.

His works are best summarized by his own personal design philosophy and unique insight into the meaning of design.

He states: "Architecture is beyond buildings. It's about arriving at a place where you believe that architecture can create an attitude of kindness."

"Kindness and compassion are exactly what best exemplify the works of Victor F. Trahan," states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine, architecture critic and Museum President/CEO of The Chicago Athenaeum.

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Add One

“Over the past three decades, Trahan’s buildings have demonstrated a combination of those qualities of talent, vision, and commitment that have produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and to the built environment through the art of architecture.”

"They have had the unique capacity to convey seemingly conflicting characteristics—power and modesty, boldness and subtlety, public authority and bravado, and at the same time, a sense of humble intimacy.”

“The work is powerfully honest and authentic—sublime masterpieces of sincerity, erudition, steeped in a thorough knowledge of the discipline of architecture, and aspirations of profound cultural awareness.”

“His built work gives opportunity and equality to the less privileged, mitigates the effects of natural disasters, reduces energy consumption, follows a resolute humanitarian agenda with the highest criteria and social objectives, and provides spaces that, at their best, welcome the public at large.”

“Innovative and inspiring, he shows how architecture can and should improve people’s lives and impact our otherwise ordinary existence—lifting us far and beyond the hectic and chaotic nature of our time, place, and cities.”

“In this decade, this is an architect in that deserves even greater professional and public accolade.”

Established in 1994, The American Prize for Architecture, also known as The Louis H. Sullivan Award, is given to an outstanding office and/or practitioner in the United States that have emblazoned a new direction in the history of American Architecture with talent, vision, and commitment and has demonstrated consistent contributions to humanity through the built environment and through the art of architecture.

The Award, organized jointly by two public institutions, The Chicago Athenaeum and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies, honors American architects, as well as other global architects practicing on a multiple of continents, whose body of architectural work, over time, exemplifies superior design and humanist ideals.

The American Prize for Architecture pays tribute to the spirit of the founder of modernism, Louis Sullivan, and the subsequent generations of Chicago practitioners as Frank Lloyd Wright, Daniel H. Burnham, and Holabird & Root.

It also broadcasts globally the significant contributions of America’s rich and inspiring architecture practice and its living legacy to the world at large.

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Add Two

Previous laureates include: Sir Norman Foster, Michael Graves, the General Services Administration, Richard Meier, Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, Form4Architecture, James von Klemperer of Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates PC., and Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear of the Miami-based firm of Arquitectonica.

Last year, the Prize was given to Eric Owen Moss.

Victor F. "Trey" Trahan was born in 1960 and grew up in the small town of Crowley, Louisiana, and earned his Bachelor of Architecture from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in 1983.

Trahan cites Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn as important influences.

In 2005, he received the *Architecture Review* Emerging Architecture Award in London; and in 2006, he was elected to the AIA College of Fellows. In 2007, he was named one of The Architectural League of New York's Emerging Voices. His alma mater, Louisiana State University, inducted him into its Hall of Distinction in 2010.

Trahan has taught semester-long studios with a focus on ecology at MIT School of Architecture and Planning (Spring 2013) and University of Southern California Architecture (Fall 2015). He is currently serving as the Catholic University of America Walton Critic and teaching a studio focused on designing for equity.

He was a visiting lecturer at the School of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University; The Catholic University of America School of Architecture and Planning; Tulane University School of Architecture; Texas Tech University College of Architecture; Duke University; Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction; Kennesaw State University College of Architecture and Construction Management; and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute School of Architecture.

The firm frequently hosts visiting students as part of its commitment to fostering collaboration.

He founded Trahan Architects in 1992 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 2013, he relocated the firm to New Orleans while opening an office in Chicago in 2012 and an office in New York in 2014.

Since 1992, he had the belief that bringing humility and awareness into the design process helps create authentic spaces that elevate our public lives.

In both his personal and professional life, Trahan is continually exploring ways to cultivate generosity and inclusiveness in relationships with each other and with our environments.

VICTOR F. TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE

Add Three

He is deeply committed to social and ecological responsibility, and his admiration for the aesthetically sublime has challenged a lifelong passion for art and nature.

His approach to architecture begins with his conviction that a building can create something that goes beyond its walls—that when we build, we are shaping our landscapes, communities, and cultures.

As such, he sees humanitarianism as central to his practice, and strives to consider his designs through a lens of conscience, compassion, and curative action, reaching beyond the traditional bounds of architecture to manifest the peace and justice that can lead us to a sense of interconnectivity.

It is his profoundly held belief that by working with attunement and leaving space for forces outside of ourselves, we can give rise to beauty, longevity, and ultimately, kindness.

The firm's work is additionally recognized for being historically grounded and innovative in its use of sustainable materials.

In 2019, Trahan Architects was ranked the #1 design firm in the U.S. for 2019, by Architect 50, a national ranking of architecture firms published by *Architect Magazine*.

Trahan resides in New Orleans, Louisiana and in Patagonia, Chile, where in 2014 he purchased, and is in the process of returning to its pristine state, a property in the Corcovado National Park, one of the eleven national parks established by North Face founder Douglas Tompkins.

The property serves as a laboratory for gathering climate data and developing new approaches to conservation.

From the outset, Trahan's works have spoken louder than words concerning this architect's unique design vision.

In one of his earliest projects, St. Jean Vianney Church (1999) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Trahan demonstrates that the simplicity in forms and materials can exalt the integrity of a sacred space.

The beautifully detailed, simple church is void of any excessive ornamentation, where the sanctuary's central focus is the gathering experience, reveals the honest expression of the materials and structure to further emphasize the spiritual character of the special space.

Likewise, the Holy Rosary Church Complex (2004) in South Louisiana, the architect worked with a limited palette

VICTOR F. TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE
Add Four

of poured-in-place concrete, plate glass, and cast glass to create a meditative environment that places a high importance on spatial characteristics and the play of light on the humble materials.

The complex for this rural Catholic Parish forms an honest exploration of form, function, light, and materials that results in an engaging and profound study in spiritual architecture.

In 2008, Holy Rosary Church was awarded with an American Architecture Award by The Chicago Athenaeum.

His Louisiana State University Student Academic Center (2002) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is layered and rich experience of light, mass and volume that serves in opposition to the hectic lives of the student athletes.

The use a simple and honest palette of natural materials and modern details to create the new interior and to signify the importance of learning through the architecture and materials.

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Trahan worked with Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation and the German firm and laureates of the European Prize for Architecture Graft Architects to design the Make It Right House (2008) in his hometown of New Orleans.

As was one of the first 21 architects to design a house for Make It Right, in his dwelling, the roof became the main architectural expression, referencing the pitched roofs that are common to the area.

As the roof evolved from pragmatic form and function, it then transitioned into a high-performance component that promotes energy and water efficiency.

The Make It Right House was awarded with an American Architecture Award in 2008.

From 2010 onward, Trahan has worked on an assortment of cultural, athletic, academic, ecological, hospitality, commercial, residential, and urban planning projects, constantly evolving, and always fresh in their approach, and winning numerous awards and public accolades.

The Louisiana State Museum and Sports Hall of Fame (2013) in Natchitoches, Louisiana merges two contrasting collections formerly housed in a university coliseum and a 19th-Century courthouse, elevating the visitor experience for both.

Set in the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase on the banks of the Cane River Lake, the design mediates the dialogue between sports and history, past and future, container and contained.

VICTOR F. TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE Add Five

The design reflects the carving of the ancient river whose fluvial geomorphology inspired the dynamic interior form.

The foyer, sculpted out of 1,100 cast stone panels, is seamlessly integrating and washed by natural light from above. The flowing surfaces reach into the galleries, serving as "screens" for film and display.

At the climax of the upper level, the path arrives at a veranda overlooking the city square, sheltered by copper louvers, further connecting the interior to the public realm.

The museum was awarded with a 2014 International Architecture Award from The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies and The Chicago Athenaeum.

In 2019, Trahan created 111 North, an elegant, slender 26-story residential tower proposed along the Mississippi River in the heart of Downtown Baton Rouge.

The narrow design, standing tall like a pencil on the skyline, featured architectural poured-in-place concrete and floor-to-ceiling glass to offer stunning views of the surrounding downtown area.

Its minimal, almost ethereal composition, won 111 North an American Architecture Award that same year.

In New England, the firm designed another tower, New England Mixed-Use Development (2020), which was conceived of as part of a larger master plan in the downtown area of a New England metropolis, the project is organized around a central carved void.

At ground floor the passage locates all of the lobby spaces within a sheltered, sculptural volume.

The stirring, leaning tower artistically forms a tangible map, imbued with weight and texture, as well as age and patina, that poetically conveys the thought process that went into its design.

With its eloquent awareness of scale through an assemblage of volumes, the tower won an American Architecture Award in 2021.

Another project in his native city for Julia Street Mixed-Use Development (Expected Completion 2024), Trahan envisioned a two-glass monolithic scheme, one 49-story and the other 16-story, where each tower is uniquely designed to respond to the conditions of the site and surrounding context, offering residents' endless vistas of the city and Louisiana landscape beyond.

VICTOR F. TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE
Add Six

Civic and poetic, this project won an International Architecture Award in 2020.

In 2021, the firm designed its largest project to date: the massive, sleek Zhengzhou Mixed-Use Development, Zhengzhou, China—a 4.3 million square-foot mixed-use development in the historic city center of the city.

Here, through uncommon richness and bold expression, the design for the mega complex blends the hotel and live/work spaces at the top with the retail base; and in order to maximize and prioritize the corners of the site, the hotel and live/work program are skillfully rotated over the corners of the complex with great dexterity and erudition, framing the exterior and interior.

The one recent project that bespeaks this architect's strong, singular intellect is the Luther George Park (2022) for Springdale, Arkansas that he developed with Australian landscape architects Spackman Mossop Michaels.

The project is conceived as a "gateway" for the city and as a performance pavilion where the shell leans back toward the earth fronting a small lawn enabling intimate community events like movie night.

Set in a marvelous illusory park, the sculptural wing-like form with its torquing geometry appears more dreamlike than real.

The shell's raw steel will patina with time to reveal a rich and earthy finish and the nuances of the environmental condition.

Luther Park won a 2020 American Architecture Award from The Chicago Athenaeum.

Likewise, his Fundo Tic Toc Pier (2018) for the Parque Nacional Corcovado Preserve in Los Lagos Region Chile has the same simple, poetic solution that is clear-cut, yet powerful and deeply evocative.

Constructed and crafted by hand out of large slabs of native coigüe wood, the pier is oriented toward the mountains at the horizon and provides access to the beaches at the periphery of the site.

Recently, Trahan Architects was selected as the architectural force behind the \$450 million interior renovations of the Caesars Superdome, formerly known as the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, in New Orleans.

In November 2019, phase one plans were approved by the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District, commonly known as the Superdome Commission, and work began January 2020.

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Add Seven

“Victor F. "Trey" Trahan epitomizes the revival of a more poetically and intellectually engaged architect who advocates for the role of the architect as being challenged to serve greater social, cultural, and humanitarian needs and concerns of our civilization and society,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine.

“Each of Trahan’s buildings show a precise understanding of how people will use the facility, the thoughtful and appropriate use of materials, and a commitment to creating public spaces to benefit the larger community.”

“By his professional example, he has so meaningfully expanded the role of the architect.”

Few in this profession, particularly today, have risen to the demands of practicing architecture as an artful endeavor.”

“This is an architect who wholeheartedly believes in the poetic simplicity of materials and place-making, never leaving an architect’s heavy-handed finger print on the design concept, intent, or final outcome.”

“For the inspiration he provides, through his complex, intellectual example and his rich contributions to architecture and humanity past and future, Victor F. "Trey" Trahan is the recipient of the 2021 American Prize for Architecture.”

The official ceremony for The American Prize for Architecture takes place at a Gala Reception/Dinner during Art Basel that also honors the recipients of 2020-2021 American Architecture Awards on Thursday, December 2 at Arquitectonica’s recent hotel Mr. C Coconut Grove (2988 Mcfarlane Road, Miami, Florida).

Tickets are available by calling The Chicago Athenaeum at +815/777-4444 or by email at jennifer@chicagoathenaeum.org.

Trahan's recent work and over 130 winning projects from the 2021 American Architecture Awards are published as a catalogue for Global Design + Urbanism XXI ("New American Architecture") edited by Christian Narkiewicz-Laine for Metropolitan Arts Press Ltd.

The catalogue is available through The European Centre by email konstadina@europeanarch.eu and at www.metropolitanartspress.com

VICTOR F. TRAHAN III WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS 2021 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE
Add Eight

For more information, contact Jennifer Nyholm, Director of Communications, The Chicago Athenaeum at +815/777-4444 or by email at jennifer@chicagoathenaeum.org.

NOTE TO REPORTERS AND EDITORS: Photographs of Trahan Architects are available for download. For more details on the award and previous winners, visit The Chicago Athenaeum's website at www.chi-athenaeum.org.

About The Chicago Athenaeum (www.chi-athenaeum.org) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide public education about the significance of architecture and design and how those disciplines can have a positive effect on the human environment.

About The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies (www.europeanarch.eu) is dedicated to public education concerning all aspects of the built environment - from entire cities to individual buildings - including the philosophical issues of arts and culture that ultimately give the final shape to design. A high emphasis exists on contemporary values and aesthetics, conservation and sustainability, and the theoretical exploration and advancement of art and design as the highest expression of culture and urbanism.

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