

AWARDS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Lauriol Plaza Restaurant**, Washington, DC (SiRu)
2002 DC AIA Catalyst Award for "Exceptional Design that Enriches City Life"
2001 IIDA Design Award Lighting - MCLA, Inc.
9.2000 Where, "Creating Fantasy Places for the City's Hip and Hungry," Amy Alipio
11.14.99 The Washington Post Magazine
"As Good as Old," Phyllis Richmond
09.30.99 The Washington Times, "Lauriol Plaza earns accolades in new location," C. Lothar
08.07.99 The Washington Post, "Cornering the Market at 18th + T," Benjamin Forgey



Lauriol Plaza Restaurant – P Patel Photography

- Tik Tok Convenience Shop**, Washington DC (SiRu)
10.14.02 The Washington Post, "Boxed Out," Benjamin Forgey
- Cleveland Hopkins International Airport** (KCF/SHG)
1999 Award of Merit in Architecture, DCAIA
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service Training Center**, Shepherdstown, WV (KCF)
1997 Award of Merit in Architecture, DCAIA
- Hamilton Hotel**, (Crowne Plaza), Washington, DC (KCF)
07.20.96 The Washington Post, "Rooms for Improvement," Benjamin Forgey
- Mary, Mirror of Justice Chapel**, Catholic University of America (KCF)
1995 Award of Excellence in Interior Architecture, DC AIA
- MCI Center, Washington**, DC (KCF)
1995 DCAIA Merit Award
09.28.95 The Washington Post, "An Outsider That Fits In; MCI Arena Planners Take Their Best Shot and Score," Benjamin Forgey

SINGLETERARY RUEDA ARCHITECTS



Mary, Mirror of Justice Chapel – P Patel Photography

Metropolitan Community Church, Washington, DC (SRA)

1994 AIA and National Concrete Masonry Association, Design Award of Excellence

1993 Award of Merit in Architecture, DC AIA

1993 IFRAA Honor Award

1993 Masonry Institute First Award

"The Building Blocks of Washington," Benjamin Forgey, *The Washington Post*, 3.18.94.

"Labor of Love," Stephen Kliment, *Architectural Record*, October 1993.

"A sanctuary, yes, but this is no place to hide," Herbert Muschamp, *The New York Times*, 9.28.93.

"A Clear View of Heaven," Benjamin Forgey, *The Washington Post*, 2.6.93.

George Washington University, Northern Virginia Graduate Research Training Center, Ashburn, VA (KCF)

"Campus Generator," Vernon Mays, *Architecture*, March 1993

1991 Masonry Institute First Award

Washington Design Center, Washington, DC (KCF)

1991 Award of Merit in Architecture, DC AIA

"Glass Act," Lynn Nesmith, *Architecture*, April 1991

EXHIBITS

KILL Architects, *Visions of Home*, "Guess who's coming to dinner?" 1994 (National Building Museum)

1994 *The Washington Post*, "Dwelling on the Possibilities," Benjamin Forgey,

1994 *The Washington Post*, "No Place like Home" Home Section Patricia Rodgers

KILL Architects, *Visions/ Revisions*, "Single Bullet Theory" 1992 (National Building Museum)

The Washington Post

Saturday, August 7, 1999



Prakash Patel Photography

The Lauriol Plaza Restaurant, by SiRu architects is a dream come true for a Washington restaurateur.

Cornering the Market at 18th and T

By Benjamin Forgey
Washington Post Staff Writer
Saturday, August 7, 1999; Page C01

Architects for centuries have capitalized on the visibility and prominence of urban corners, sometimes with spectacular results. The Willard Hotel, for instance, is a great corner building.

But even modest intersections far away from grand avenues can stimulate architectural creativity. Eighteenth and T Streets NW, in the heart of a historic residential district near Dupont Circle, is one such lucky corner.

More than a century ago an architect celebrated the junction with a stylish turreted mansion on the northeast. Now, with this week's opening of the Lauriol Plaza Restaurant just across T Street, the humble intersection has two architectural marks of distinction.

Some of the freshest--and all of the most colorful and entertaining--architectural work in the Washington region of late and has been done in restaurants or clubs. In this sense, Lauriol Plaza is the continuation of a trend, yet another indication that, to a certain segment of the booming local restaurant industry, quality architecture is a critical part of the competitive equation.

But the new Lauriol Plaza is different from most of the other fine restaurant designs. It is not just an imaginative reconfiguration of an existing interior. It is the entire enchilada, a single-purpose building designed from the ground up by the young architectural firm of SiRu Architects, formed two years ago by Andrew Singletary and Guillermo Rueda.

The restaurant itself is not new. Longtime Washington restaurateur Raul Sanchez and chef Luis Reyes opened Lauriol Plaza 16 years ago in a reconditioned two-story building a block to the south, at 18th and S Streets NW. As the old building became more and more overstuffed, Sanchez and Reyes began to eye the underused lot at 18th and T Streets, occupied for years by a parking lot and a neighborhood liquor store.

"For Raul, this was like building his dream house," says architect Rueda. Initially, after the land purchase a couple years ago, the idea was to maximize the site's profit potential with a mixed-use, office-restaurant-retail building--the conventional approach. Gradually, however, it dawned on the restaurateurs that they ought to stick to doing what they do best and build a restaurant.

The decision, Sanchez recalls, allowed him for the first time to imagine how the restaurant of his dreams would function. The kitchen and its ancillary operations were his primary concerns. "What look the building would have, I really didn't care that much," he says.

Cornering the Market at 18th and T

Page 2 of 3

For the architects, the idea of designing a restaurant from scratch was equally liberating. No longer required to squeeze in every possible square inch of leasable floor space, they were free to think about how best to shape spaces for the restaurant's different functions, and how these spaces might best be reflected on the building's exterior in a historic district with strong community oversight.

The result is a splendid little corner building, a modest tour de force of inside-outside dynamics. Unlike the turreted residence directly across T Street, the Lauriol Plaza building makes no obvious formal gesture in honor of its corner location. Rather, its primary facades are studied, rectangular compositions of solid and transparent planes. It is a polite, horizontal building with a sense of style.



Prakash Patel Photography

But during business hours the building becomes both a generator and a container of energy. The towering windows of the main dining room, ranged in parade rhythm along 18th Street, enable diners to savor views of life on the sidewalks and streets outside, and passersby to enjoy reciprocal glimpses of relaxed patrons and scurrying waiters.

The sense of give and take is at once urban and urbane. And at nighttime, thanks in no small measure to the skillful work of Moran Coventry Lighting Associates, the scene becomes a magic one. Glowing softly from within, the busy restaurant with its tall windows and dramatically illuminated brick piers is an apparitional ocean liner, heading north toward Adams-Morgan.

Admittedly, in the full light of day the building still looks a bit naked in its slightly unfinished state. There is no sign above the door. The up-swooping canopy above the off-center entrance awaits its sheet-metal sheathing--at present, its exposed structural members look pained, resembling skeletal elephant tusks.

And the bright blue umbrellas outside don't quite make up for the fact that the sidewalk cafe does not yet exist--no tables, chairs, railing or wall-mounted canopy. These missing elements are important, because the attractive but rather flat 18th Street facade needs all the layering it can get.

The back of this building, incidentally, is every bit as appealing as the front although, appropriately, its character is more relaxed. In a nice gesture to nearby homes, the architects reduced the height of the rear portion of the building and gave it a graceful, curved roof covered in standing-seam metal sheets. The metal facing of the rear facade--a soft galvanized alloy--is a quietly inspired tribute to the visual informality of Washington's alleys.



Prakash Patel Photography

Lauriol Plaza's spacious, varied interiors are a treat. You enter a low-ceilinged bar-and-waiting room and then, on a crowded evening . . . you wait. Fortunately, the spatial payoffs definitely are worth waiting for. Delivering on promises established by the crisp exteriors, the building's inside is a dynamic sequence of spaces that celebrates both movement and repose (with the scales tipped slightly in favor of the former).

First in line is a trip up a short flight of stairs to the main dining room, a long, high, loft-like space distinguished by those notable windows and Antonia Miguel's mural-sized painting of Seville. From this big room you ascend

via cantilevered stairwell to a more intimate mezzanine dining area--the room with that distinctive curved ceiling, covered in Alvar Aalto-esque fashion with smooth strips of wood. From the mezzanine you climb--again via a nautical-industrial style stairwell--to the uncovered roof garden, where the wooden trellis supplies a frame for open sky. (The mezzanine and roof also are accessible by elevator.)

The detailing is a unity of opposites: Cold steel contrasts with warm woods throughout. Matter-of-fact fixtures such as clasps and brackets, attached with ordinary nuts and bolts, exude a certain poignant, look-at-me quality. To paraphrase Le Corbusier, Lauriol Plaza may be a machine for dining in, but it has a somewhat hand-made touch.

This commission was a break and a breakthrough for SiRu Architects. Singletary and Rueda met while working at the Washington firm of Keyes, Condon, Florance (now KCF/SHG), which has functioned over the years as a post-graduate school for many a Washington architect. The two clearly made good on their first major Washington job, blending modern architecture and conventional Washington politesse without breaking a sweat.

City corners are important. They are places of movement and fresh possibility. You get your bearings at the intersections of the urban grid. You turn the corner. You walk to the corner store. You hang out at the corner. You watch the world go by. In the Lauriol Plaza building SiRu Architects exploited these advantages to the full. As a result, the corner of 18th and T Streets today is more vividly alive than ever before.

The Washington Post

Cityscape

Holiness Is in the Details

By Benjamin Forgey

Washington Post Staff Writer

Saturday, September 14, 2002; Page C05

Boxed Out

Sometimes, an architectural project is star-crossed. There is simply no other way to explain the volume of mistakes, misfortunes and misunderstandings that plague the process from beginning to end.

One thinks, for instance, of Jorn Utzon's Sydney Opera House, that photogenic bundle of sail-like concrete forms that has become the world-famous symbol of the Australian city. Amid scandal and political furor, it took nearly three times as long and 15 times as much money as originally predicted to build.

And then one thinks of the Tik Tok Easy Shop in Adams Morgan.

Okay, maybe the comparison is a bit out of scale. There are 217 miles of steel cable in the Sydney building's concrete sails. The Tik Tok structure is wrapped in maybe 80 linear feet of metal casing. Construction of the opera house embroiled a city, a region and a nation in political strife. The Tik Tok, so far, has embattled a neighborhood, a city council member and a regulatory agency. But still.

The Tik Tok Easy Shop appeared last month on a vacant lot at 18th and California streets NW. It is, depending on one's point of view, either an extra-large vending machine or an automated convenience store. The contraption got people's attention because it was thought by some to be (a) ugly, (b) an example of unfair competition, (c) a regulatory miscue, or (d) all three.

Leaving aside (b) and (c) -- those ongoing disputes have received their fair share of notice -- let's turn to the ugliness issue. Yes, the thing is pretty nasty -- meaning, it is a little bit pretty and quite a bit nasty.

The pretty part is all on the inside: neatly arranged goods in an apt, machine-like setting. Watching the mechanical scoop retrieve your can of Campbell's tomato soup is rather satisfying.

But on the outside the unit looks like an industrial-size refrigerator awkwardly adorned with blue awnings. The proportions are displeasing, the sheathing is unlikable -- not because it's metal, but because it is an unappealing, bargain-basement metal -- and the detailing is just awful. Why would anyone who wants to make a buck -- in this case, McDonald's -- deposit in a public place a thing that seems to be intentionally offensive?

But wait a minute -- the thing is standing naked out there. Washington architects Andrew Singletary and Guillermo Rueda, designers of the excellent, spirited building for the Lauriol Plaza Restaurant a few blocks south on 18th Street, were commissioned to create a suit of clothes for the unit.

And a very nice suit it turns out to be -- horizontal stripes made of yellow-toned wood, narrow steel posts in subtle blue and a hat of silvery corrugated metal supported by angled beams. The understated design would give the machine a certain approachability and appeal, a sense of scale and rhythm that it disastrously lacks.

"We were thinking when we were hired that they would build the enclosure and the machine at the same time," Singletary says -- a reasonable assumption. For some reason, however, it didn't happen. But it should.

