

ART OF SPACE

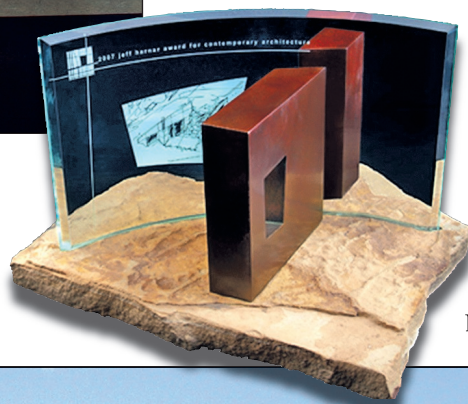
Paul Weideman

architecture



Dining room of the Barrett residence, Santa Fe, designed by Jeff Harnar

Right, the Jeff Harnar Award; below, Harnar's home, Santa Fe



Cutting-edge adobe

Here comes the entry deadline — Sept. 18 — for the third annual Jeff Harnar Award for Contemporary Architecture. There are two big changes this year. First, the competition expands to projects built throughout New Mexico, not just in Santa Fe County. And the prize increases from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The award, established by Garrett Thornburg, honors Harnar, a Santa Fe architect whose contemporary designs made strong references to the local architectural vernacular. Harnar died in 2006 at age 52.

“Garrett’s idea is that it’s important to recognize and celebrate contemporary architecture,” said Suzanne Barker Kalangis, executive director of the Thornburg Charitable Foundation. “He adores great architecture, and he wants contemporary architecture to have its place in our region.”

“Unlike other parts of the United States,” said Jon Anderson, one of the judges for the 2009 Harnar Award, “there’s a precedent for architecture in this state that is unique, starting with the Anasazi ruins, which I find to be very inspirational. I do love the concept of building with adobe, but unfortunately

it’s so expensive that I rarely get to do it.”

Anderson is a 1973 graduate of The University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning. Among the projects of Jon Anderson Architecture, founded in 1991, are the beautiful two-story glass Mini Cooper dealership in

Albuquerque; the UNM School of Architecture and Planning building (in association with Antoine Predock); and the intriguing Flyway View House residence, located adjacent to the Rio Grande Nature Center.

The architect has his home and office in Albuquerque’s Fourth Ward Historic District. “I love the old adobes, but one thing I’m very much opposed to is replicating what those builders did a hundred years ago,” he said. “What was driving a lot of the details were limitations in materials and technology. If they had access to the materials and technology that we have today, the surviving buildings might look very different. The punched windows, for example, were often driven by the fact that they didn’t have access to a lot of window glass.”

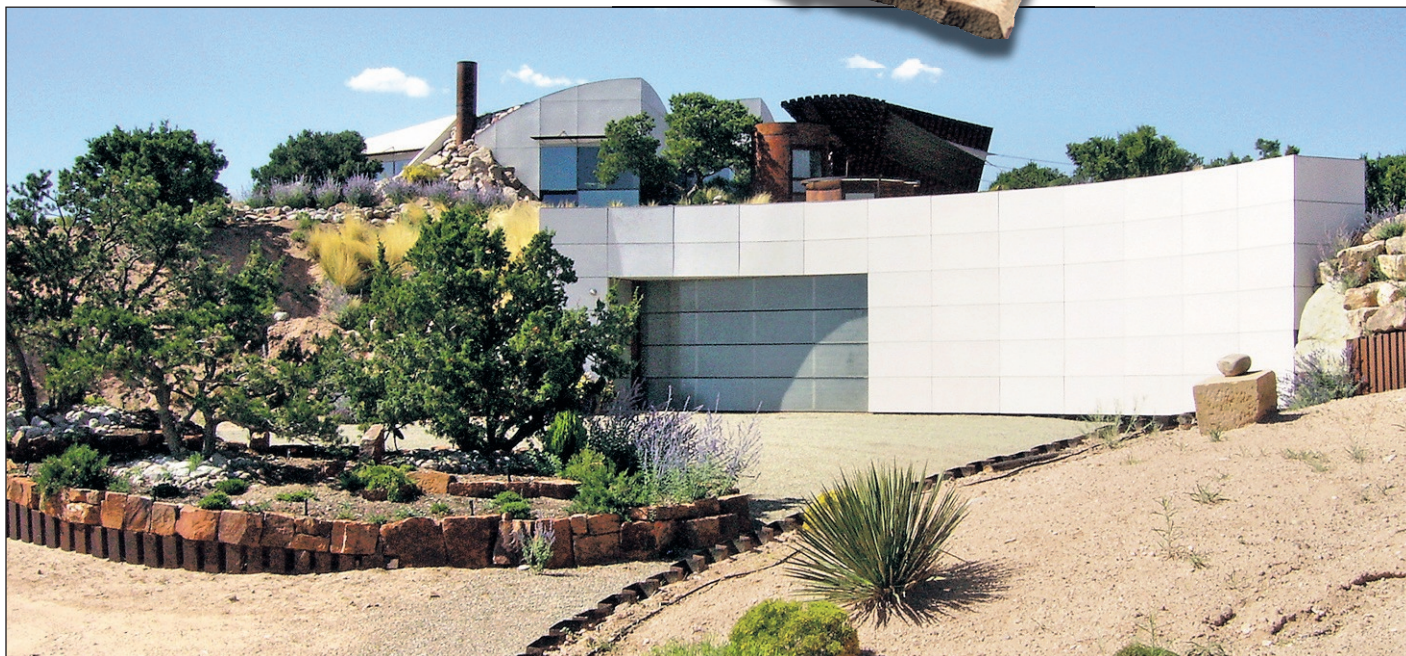
Adobe architecture — putting up a structure using earth dug from the site — was essentially free in the days when houses were built by families and neighbors. “Yeah, if you’re in a position to build yourself, that’s a possibility, doing a mud pit on your lot and forming your own adobes,” Anderson said. “And you could build contemporary architecture with adobes.”

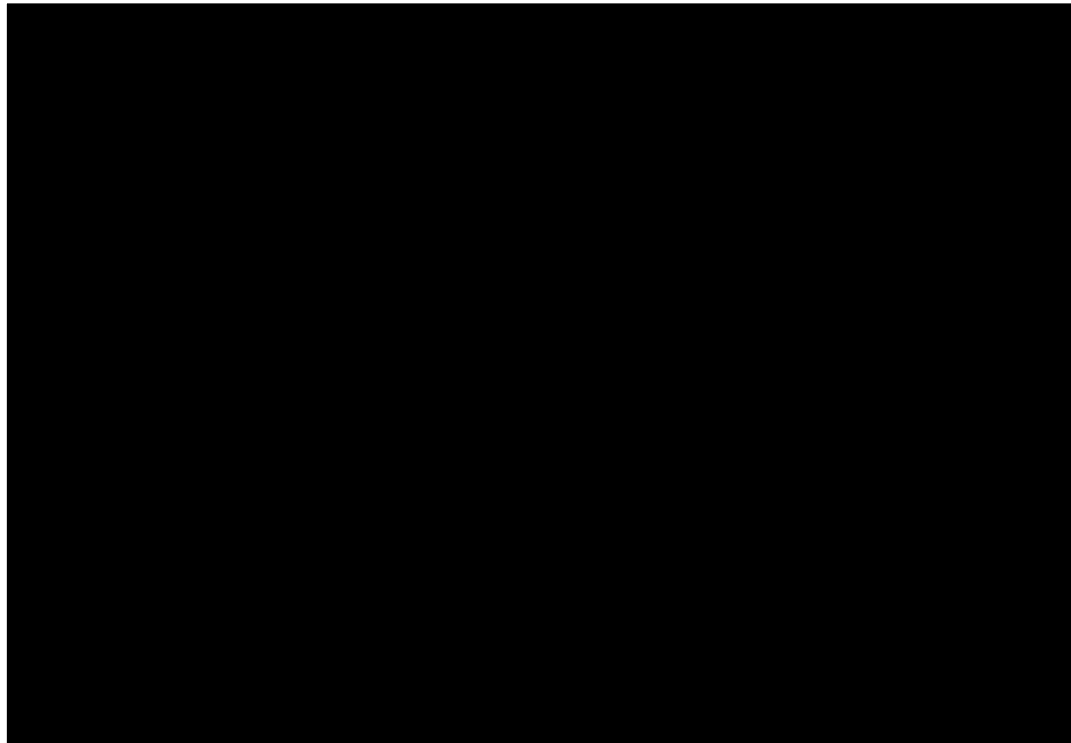
Laura Steward, another of this year’s judges, agrees with that notion. “I’ve seen beautiful straw-bale houses that are perfectly contemporary houses, and I would be curious to see architects building contemporary using the most important historical material: adobe.” Steward has been the Phillips Director of SITE Santa Fe since April 2005 and formerly was founding curator at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

“I am by far the least qualified member of this panel of judges,” Steward said. “I’m only a consumer and an enjoyer of architecture. I pay the most attention to art museums; and there are art museums designed by famous architects, and they don’t play well with other art forms. Good architecture needs to have integrity and a reason for being on the planet, but it shouldn’t shout at you. It should be able to welcome other endeavors as equal partners, not get too big for its britches.”

A worthy piece of contemporary architecture for Steward has “character and visual interest and speaks to its time, and looks to the future, and is not boring — never boring — but its main role should be as a great supporter of the program.” (In architectural parlance, “program” refers to the client’s practical needs, whether it’s the design enabling good traffic flow in a house or a museum, or creating pragmatic work spaces in an office building.)

Steward made similar remarks to those volunteered by Anderson regarding the overuse of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival (“Santa Fe”) style. “The best way to show respect to the old adobes is not to copy them,





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