CHARLES CUNNIFFE

TIM HAGMAN

SARAH BROUGHTON

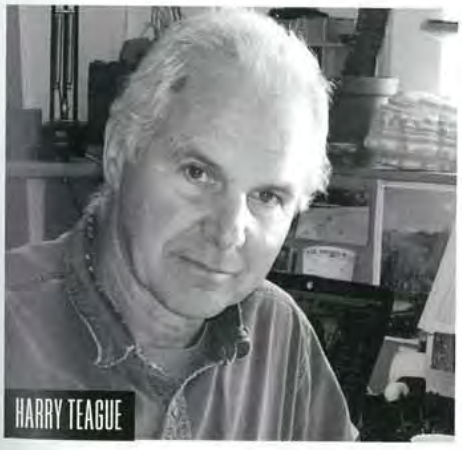
GLENN RAPPAPORT

BUILDING AN ARGUMENT

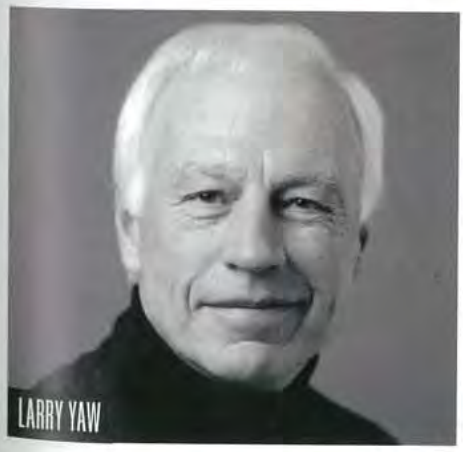
Ten local architects choose their favorite valley structures.

BY SUSAN BENNER

SCOTT SMITH


HARRY TEAGUE

WILLIS PEMBER


LARRY YAW

HEIDI HULL HOFFMANN

BILL POSS

COURTESY PHOTOS

THE METHODOLOGY WAS SIMPLE: Ask ten Aspen-area architects with decades-long perspectives on the built environment in the Roaring Fork Valley to choose and rate their ten favorite local structures, with one stipulation—they could not nominate their own work. The highest score was ten. *Aspen Sojourner* then compiled the submissions and ranked the structures according to the total number of points received.

The architects—Sarah Broughton, Charles Cunniffe, Tim Hagman, Heidi Hull Hoffmann, Willis Pember, Bill Poss, Glenn Rappaport, Scott Smith, Harry Teague, and Larry Yaw—came up with lists as eclectic as their own distinctive architectural styles. Among the sixty-three structures they chose that did not rank among the consolidated top ten are the now-demolished midcentury-modern Given Institute, the twice-remade Victorian Sardy House, the Hotel Jerome, Andre Ulrych's 1970s Magic Mushroom House, the John Denver Sanctuary, the grass-roofed John Lautner House in Meadowood, Scott Lindenau's update of Francis Stanton's parabolic-roofed Christ Episcopal Church, and Paul Soldner's ceramic studio at Anderson Ranch Arts Center.

Nine of the top ten choices on the final list are spaces with a public purpose. Only one is a private residence, in Aspen's West End. Three were designed by Teague. In their own way, all ten reflect high points in Aspen's architectural history—or at least, so asserts our panel of experts. Knowing how passionately Aspenites care about their town and its character, we welcome the debate sure to follow.

#1
ASPEN MEADOWS

As a campus, Aspen Meadows represents a civic, intellectual, and spiritual ideal, says Glenn Rappaport, calling it "a cohesive vision of midcentury modernism."

The land was a meadow, became a racetrack, and is now again a meadow. The original building on the site was a tent—a white canvas pavilion Eero Saarinen designed for Walter Paepcke's Goethe bicentennial celebration in 1949, to which Paepcke invited luminaries such as Albert Schweitzer, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Thornton Wilder, and Arthur Rubinstein.

The event was so successful that Paepcke founded the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies that fall. He hired Bauhaus master Herbert Bayer, with architect Fritz Benedict, to design the buildings that soon followed: the Seminar Hall with its *sgraffito* mural of Red Mountain in 1953; the Aspen Meadows Guest Chalets in 1954, since demolished and rebuilt; the Central Building, housing reception and a restaurant, in 1954; the Grass Mounds and Marble Sculpture Garden in 1955 (Bayer only); the Health Center in 1955; the since-demolished Institute for Theoretical Physics in 1962 (with Harry Ellenzweig); and a more permanent version of Saarinen's tent in 1964.

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ARCHITECT BIOGRAPHIES

SARAH BROUGHTON, AIA, is a principal of Rowland+Broughton Architecture/Interior Design/Urban Design in Aspen and Denver. Along with her husband, John Rowland, AIA, and a team of twenty-nine architects and interior designers, she strives to shape the architectural landscape while retaining historical integrity.

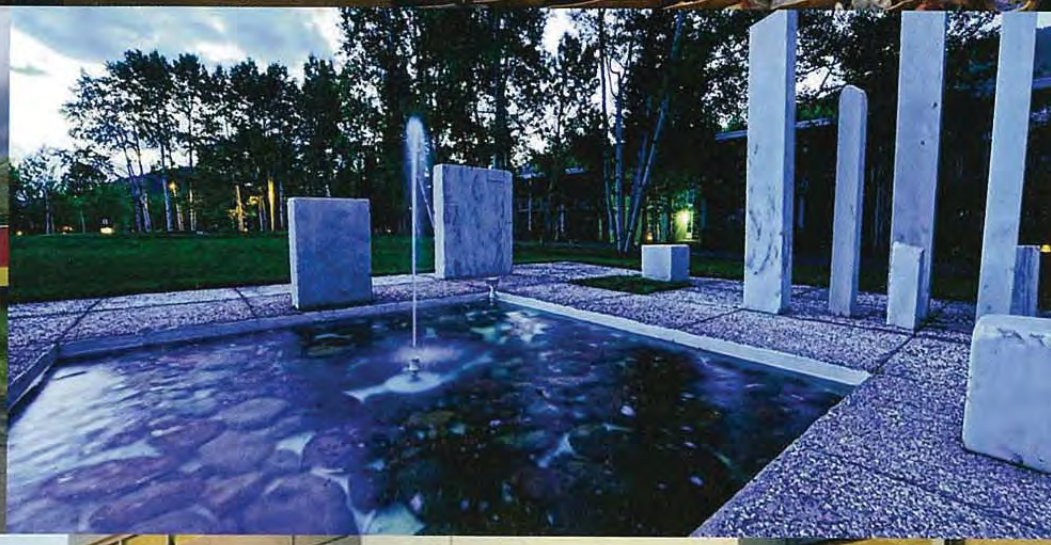
During his thirty-four years in Aspen, **CHARLES CUNNIFFE**, AIA, has received numerous design awards from the American Institute of Architects Colorado West, including Firm of the Year, Community Service by an Architect, and Mentor of the Year. Charles Cunniffe Architects was also one of *Outside*'s Best Places to Work in 2014.

TIM HAGMAN, AIA, principal of Hagman Architects, settled in the Colorado Rocky Mountains upon completing his architecture degree at the University of Washington. For over thirty years, he has reinvented and refined architecture in the western United States, using green materials and combining unique regionalism with modern appeal.

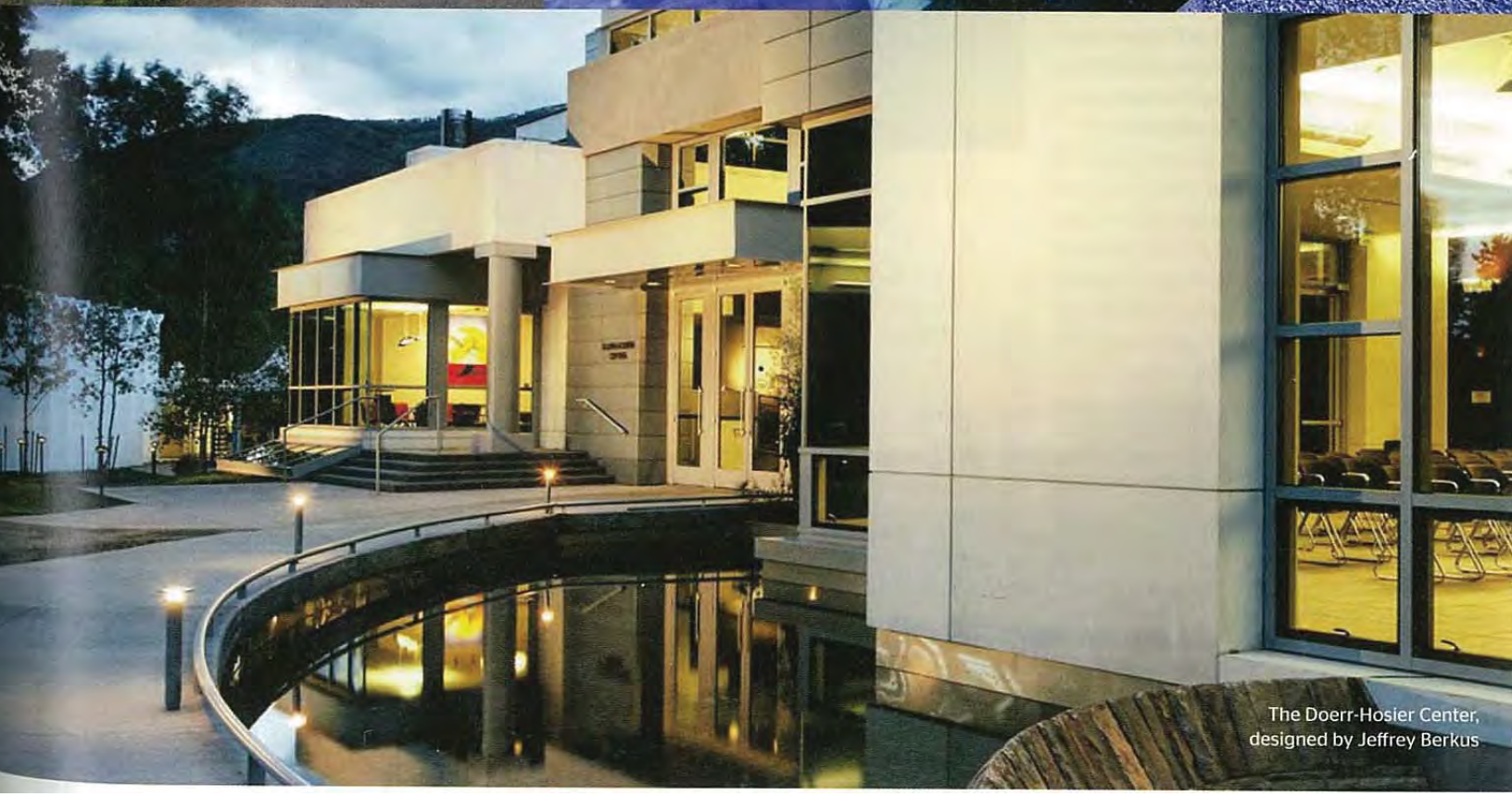
HEIDI HULL HOFFMANN, AIA, established H3 Architects in 1993 to facilitate a thoughtful collaboration of planning and design services for a wide variety of building types in the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond.

WILLIS PEMBER, AIA, began his Aspen practice in 1992 following a six-year association with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown. His work includes the the Carbondale Branch Library and the west entrance to the Red Brick Center for the Arts. He chairs the Aspen Historic Preservation Commission.

Plato's restaurant
ABOVE RIGHT: The remodeled Guest Chalets
BELOW RIGHT: Paepcke Auditorium



The Health Center
RIGHT: The Marble Sculpture Garden



The Doerr-Hosier Center,
designed by Jeffrey Berkus

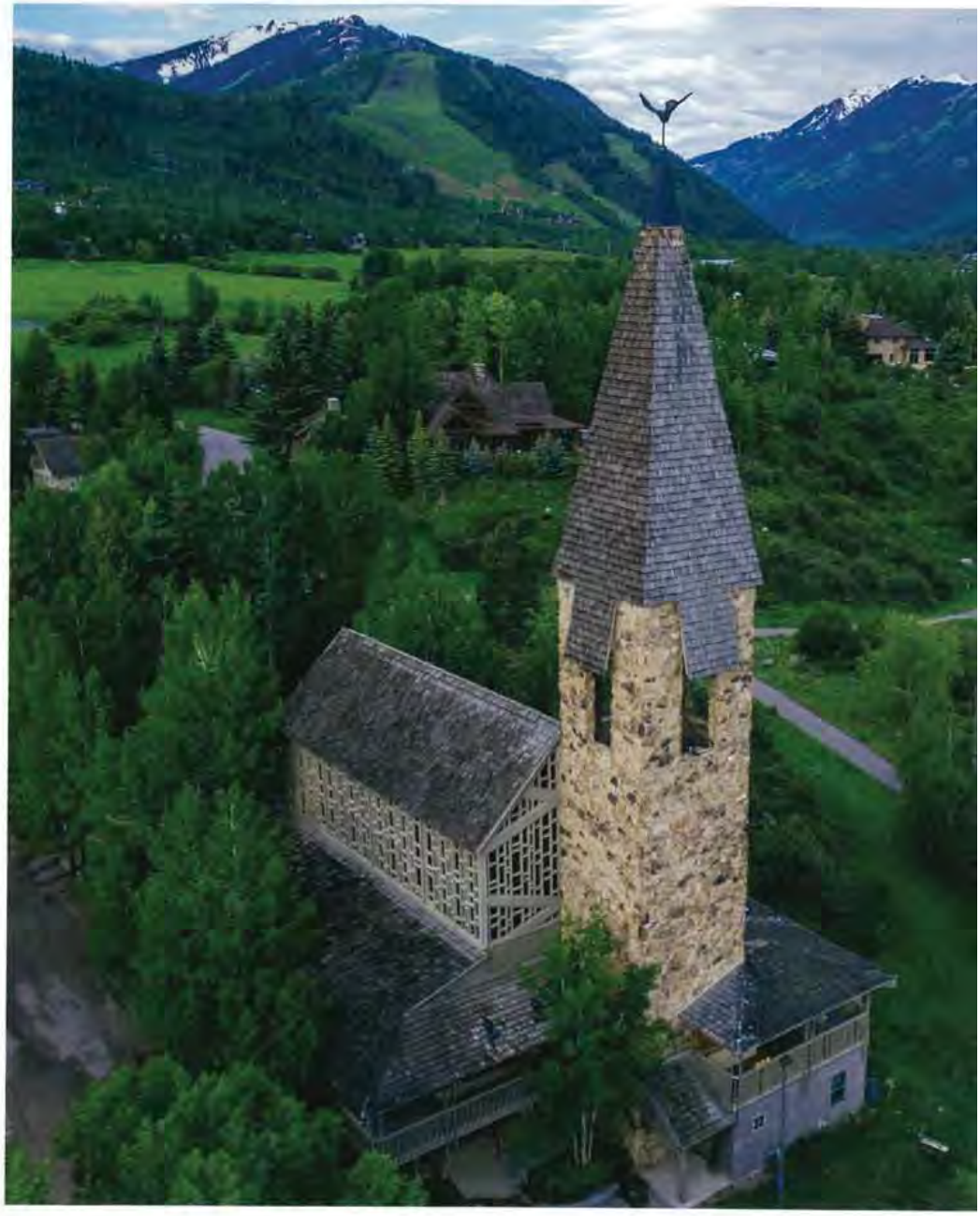
"Herbert [Bayer] took in the sky, the snow, the environment as a whole, and created an architectural response to that," says Harry Teague. "He created an architecture that reflected the environment—white roofs against the bright blue sky. He didn't have a big budget; he used very frugal materials. He built a sunbathing deck on the roof [of the Health Center] accessible by iron spiral stairs. He incorporated graphics on the Health Center wall in a way that foreshadowed the Supergraphics movement of the 1970s. The gym had this great window looking out on a grove and a pond. It's one of the finest buildings in Aspen."

Rappaport agrees.

"The site is amazing," he says. "The views are totally unexpected. There's the scale, the glazing, the concrete. The design is simple, inexpensive—true to the Herbert Bayer legacy."

"Modernism is often derided for being not of its place, for being cold, when in fact it's often warm and humanistic," says Willis Pember. Bayer was, he adds, "a protean maker: he designed buildings, landscapes, sculpture, prints, graphics, a typeface. He didn't draw boxes around anything."

The campus's location on the periphery of town helped keep it intact, says Rappaport. Over time, he notes, architects have added buildings, but "the spaces between have been allowed to define what's out there."



ARCHITECT BIOGRAPHIES

For over thirty-nine years, Poss Architecture + Planning has been synonymous with innovative design, ranging from large-scale resorts to custom private residences. Led by **BILL POSS**, AIA, the firm creates structures that capture the essence of their surrounding environment while simultaneously respecting and preserving natural beauty.

GLENN RAPPAPORT, AIA, is principal of Black Shack Architects, a firm keenly interested in finding that very small overlap between the practical and problem-solving obligations of architecture and the poetic and emotional exploration that gives places their greater meaning.

As general manager of Charles Cunniffe Architects, **SCOTT SMITH**, AIA, oversees a wide variety of public and residential projects. Smith enjoys having a positive relationship and process with a variety of clients and assisting them with their design goals and visions.

HARRY TEAGUE, AIA, principal of Harry Teague Architects, has evolved an architecture combining the original humanistic principles of modern architecture with innovative materials and building technologies, such that each building is a unique response to the needs, patterns, and dreams of its inhabitants as well as the specific features of its site.

LARRY YAW, FAIA, a founding principal of Cottle Carr Yaw, began practicing as an architect in Aspen in 1971. CCY has won awards for commercial, residential, and mixed-use projects in North America and abroad, including for the Hideout and Treehouse children's centers at Buttermilk and Snowmass, the Limelight Hotel, and the Sundeck.

COURTESY PHOTOS

#2
ASPEN CHAPEL

It is a perhaps surprising icon for a ski town—a tall steeple atop a nondenominational community chapel made of stone and glass. Silhouetted against the Elk Mountains next to the roundabout that is the west entrance to Aspen, the Aspen Interfaith Chapel of the Prince of Peace is a classic though asymmetric church set into sage and cottonwoods. At the steeple's tip is a dove with an olive branch.

The architecture was inspired by renovated mills that had been turned into wayfarers' chapels in France, says Heidi Hull Hoffmann. A Mennonite bishop, Erving Yost, had seen them while traveling for conferences and led the effort to build something similar in Aspen.

"It's like a postcard to the entrance of town," says Charles Cunniffe, who put the Prince of Peace at the top of his personal list.

The chapel, completed in 1969, was designed by George Edward Heneghan Jr. and Daniel Gale, who were architectural partners, childhood friends, and alumni of Fritz Benedict's practice. Its style is considered Wright-ian Organic, says Cunniffe, for its use of materials—rough stone, wood, and glass—its simple massing, and its relationship to its landscape.

"I'm struck by its simplicity and its power," says Cunniffe.

#3
BENEDICT MUSIC TENT

"I still remember my first day in town. I was working for Harry Teague, and I walked down that allée of trees to the Tent in amazement that I had moved to a place that had chosen a tent for a major public event space," says Sarah Broughton. "It's approachable yet sophisticated, open to anyone. It embodies Aspen in that way. I love … that it's built to be ephemeral. It's a soft footprint—it bleeds into the landscape, opens up to the lawn. It's magic."

From a distance, Teague's tent, like its predecessors designed by Eero Saarinen and Herbert Bayer, is white, festive, soaringly sculptural, and ethereal—visually light enough to float. The support structure—the outside arcs and cables, the inside geometry of trusses—is exposed, graceful, and dramatic. The Bayer-blue baffles that form the tent's sides rotate to reveal the performance to the audience outside on the aspen-studded lawn, where people uncork bottles, open picnic baskets, read the *New York Times*, and watch clouds massing overhead as they wait for the first notes or words to pierce the clear mountain air.

"It does a remarkable job of replacing the old without losing its character," says Charles Cunniffe. "It's well-executed, advanced acoustically. It's appropriate that Harry Teague was the architect—he studied under [Fritz] Benedict, he's linked to the history. It feels even more connected to the outside than its predecessors."

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#4
LUNDY HOUSE

Victor Lundy's early 1970s West End vacation house, which the architect designed for his wife, inspires admiration for its daring simplicity and lightness on the land. "It's extraordinary," says Harry Teague of the only residence among the collective top ten.

The house is essentially a pulled-apart cube, with three walls of brick and one of glass, says Glenn Rappaport. "The walls are massive but pulled apart—they don't quite meet," he explains. "The roof floats above the walls."

"Victor achieves what many modernists worked for—the integration of inside and outside," says Teague. "When you're inside, light comes in all these corners. You're surrounded by architecture, yet connected to the outside. It's timeless in its aesthetic."

"Midcentury modernist structures were about a lifestyle that's disappearing," says Rappaport. In this house, "there's simplicity. There's mystery. It's poetic. It's a tent and a cave."

PHOTOS BY DEREK SKALKO

#5
POWERS ART CENTER

"It is an elegant, quiet statement in a pristine field," Bill Poss says of the Powers Art Center, a Hiroshi Nanamori–designed, red Colorado sandstone cube placed in a pasture above Carbondale with views of Mount Sopris. Commissioned by Kimiko Powers to honor the memory of her husband, John Powers—a publisher, lifelong art collector, and Aspen Institute board member—the small private museum, which opened to the public in 2014, displays a rotating selection of the Powers' extensive collection of Jasper Johns works on paper.

"For the Roaring Fork Valley, it's an incredible amenity," says Tim Hagman. He says he loves the flow, the views, the symmetry of the building on a diagonal axis, the approach, the pergola, the reflecting pool, and how the pergola frames the reflecting pool and the views.

"You have to go visit," Poss insists. >

#6

ASPEN ART MUSEUM

When the newest building on the list, the Aspen Art Museum—a light-filled, lattice-covered cube designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architect Shigeru Ban—opened in August 2014, many local observers considered it disruptive of the streetscape. Architecturally distinct from its neighbors, which include a recently renovated Tom Benton–designed midcentury modernist rectangle, the new museum dramatically claimed its space in Aspen's built landscape.

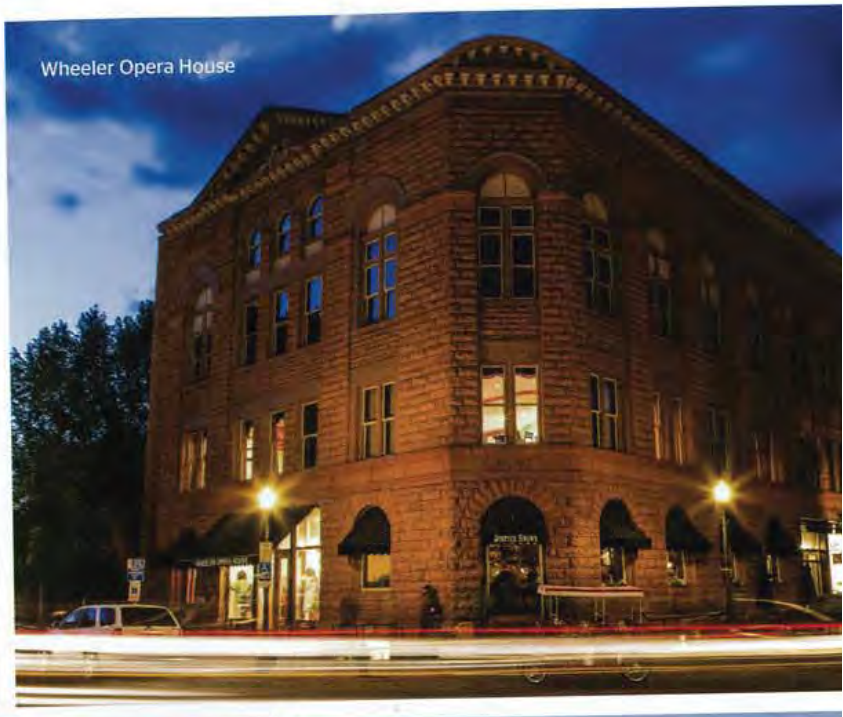
In the past year and a half, as the museum has addressed its street presence with sculptural grass, curving slatted benches, tables, and interactive sidewalk installations, local hearts and minds have been won over. The infinite geometries of the inside-and-outside double stairs, the views through the lattice as you ascend, the revelation of Aspen Mountain at the top, and, yes, sometimes the art the structure was built to show are all stunning and seductive. Admission continues to be free.

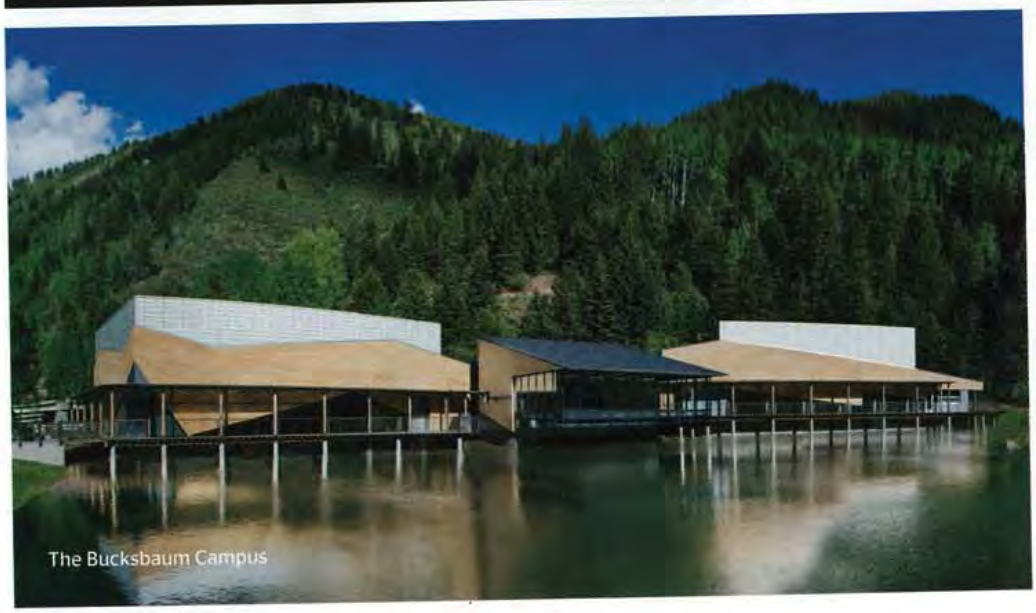
"Every town should have landmark buildings," says Sarah Broughton. "This building should be big and singular. I love that it's downtown. It's good for the community to have architecture as conversation—not everyone should like everything."

"The building boldly responds to its context," she adds. "I appreciate Shigeru Ban's sensibility: the natural light, the ascension, the opening up of the roof deck."

"Bold" is a word Tim Hagman also uses to describe the building's design. It was the right choice for an art museum in spite of the controversy it created, he says, and he appreciates the museum's bringing theoretical and cutting-edge art to the community. "What also works well are the interiors," he adds, "how they look effortless," which allows visitors to focus on the art.

Joan and Irving Harris Concert Hall


Wheeler Opera House


The Bucksbaum Campus

Basalt Regional Library

#7

JOAN AND IRVING HARRIS CONCERT HALL

"The unassuming appearance of the human-scale entry, gathering space, and ticket box, capped by a white concrete roof—a contextual reference to the surrounding topography—belies the enormity and airiness of what lies ahead and down an angled and gracious stairway to this acoustically superior music hall," Heidi Hull Hoffmann says of Harry Teague's 1993 Harris Concert Hall.

Two-thirds underground, Harris Hall does indeed blend with and complement the Herbert Bayer elements of the Aspen Meadows landscape, as well as the natural landscape. Lower than the tops of the surrounding cottonwoods and aspens, lower even than the Benedict Music Tent, its most immediate built neighbor, Harris Hall is often commended for its architectural humility. Its Frank Gehry–like asymmetric roof planes call to mind and eye the mountains across the meadow.

Down the stairs, the concert hall is a three-dimensional visual symphony of cherry, walnut, maple, and black acoustical panels laid at angles that carry the mountain metaphor inside.

#8

BUCKSBAUM CAMPUS OF THE ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL AND ASPEN COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

The site is spectacular: deep in the forest of the Castle Creek Valley, at the base of the steep western backside of Aspen Mountain, with Castle Creek running through it. The challenges for architect Harry Teague included mitigating for avalanches and mudslides, dealing with the remnants of a long-operating silver mine, preserving existing historic buildings, and