



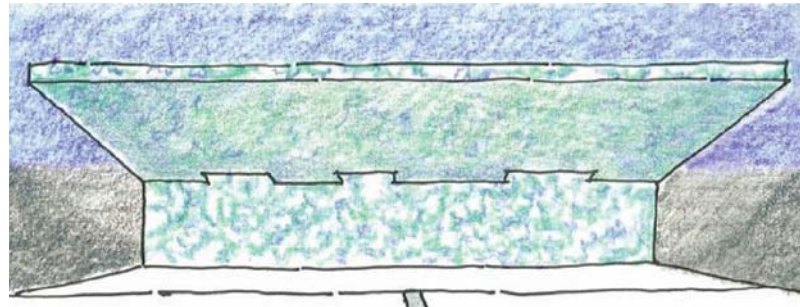
by JENNY KIEL

Folia Fictus

*...a project that makes you
happy to be in the city*

-FREELON

PROJECT Meredith Long Gallery Carport & Parking Plaza, Houston
CLIENT Meredith Long & Company
ARCHITECT Dillon Kyle Architecture
DESIGN TEAM Dillon Kyle, AIA; Peter Klein; Cedar Baldrige
CONTRACTOR Tynes Sparks Building
CONSULTANTS Baldrige Landscape (landscape); National Structural Engineering (structural)
PHOTOGRAPHER Casey Dunn Photography



Once the site of an identical apartment building as the building the gallery now inhabits, is where the designers Dillon Kyle and Cedar Baldrige imagined a parking lot built for the artists of the gallery. The parking lot is actually used more by the guests and owners of the gallery but it makes a nod to the artwork inside. It is a unique integration of art, landscape, and function.

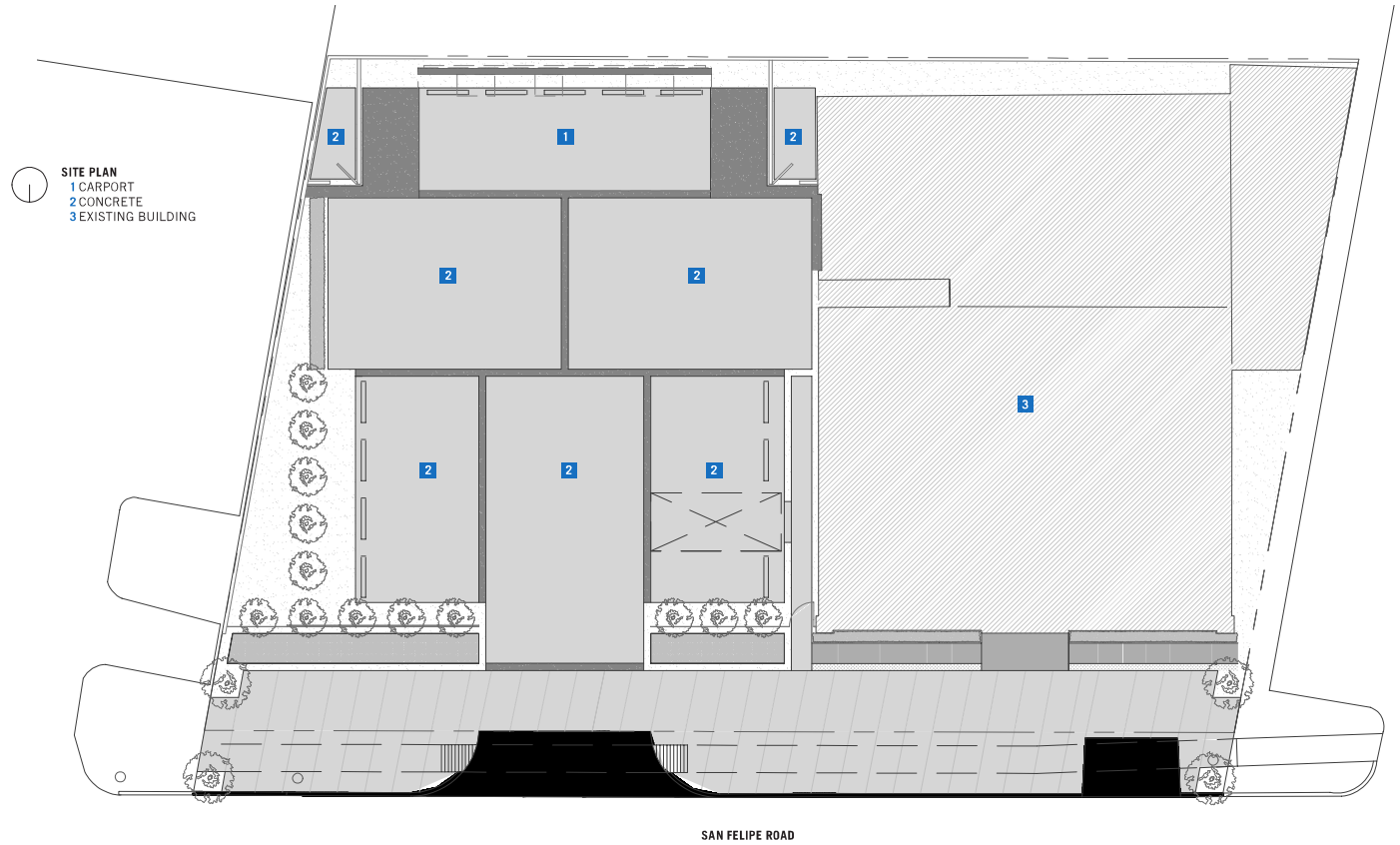
The Meredith Long Art Gallery occupies a modest cream-painted brick apartment building in the River Oaks area of Houston. Since 1957 the gallery has built a reputation for exhibiting some of the best works by nineteenth-century, twentieth-century, and contemporary artists and it has been located on the busy street of San Felipe since 1961. As coincidence would have it, the 50th anniversary would mark the beginning of a project that would both meet the gallery's need for new parking and express the artwork within.

"I wanted something to make you smile when you pass by," Kyle admits. "I wanted something happy; a lot of architecture is very serious." Initially Kyle liked the idea of using an abstract painting by Donald Sultan as the image used on the carport. Sultan, whose work is often displayed in the gallery, had completed a series of paintings of flowers where the detail and the depth of the subject are removed. The flatness of the flowers and morphed shapes enter into an abstractness that allows freedom of the imagination. Instead of using one his paintings specifically, Kyle took inspiration from Sultan's flowers to create an image through several photographs of a hedge commonly seen in landscapes in the area.

The oversized image suggests abstraction and order, propelling it into the nexus between art and architecture. The process used to create the image on the carport is a predetermined system of roughly 50 photographs of an ordinary hedge pieced together and then repeated enough times to cover the structure. The two-dimensional image maintains the intended abstraction from reality even when applied to the three-dimensional structure. Abstraction is achieved through this established order of the photographs, allowing the image to seemingly escape from reality through repetition and enlargement.



ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE WEGAND



Like a textless billboard, the carport has become another piece of artwork for the gallery by acting both as a canvas and sculpture. It definitely plays the loudest role in the design and makes a bold statement along the streetscape. Juxtaposed in a neighborhood with an abundance of fully matured trees and perfectly manicured front yards, the steel carport is wallpapered with the striking pattern of an oversized hedge. The cantilevered canopy is then angled upward showing off even more of the floral wallpaper.

The precision in craft in all the elements of the design makes this project especially appealing as a piece of architecture. Skylights are arbitrarily sized and cut into the connection between the wall of the carport and the overhang, adding a greater sense of spatiality to the design and reinforcing the clean, sleek lines despite the floral application. When standing underneath the carport, these skylights open up to the neighboring houses and trees behind the property.

The carport sits on what was intended to look like floating pads of concrete separated by thick lines of granite. The pads of concrete delineate the three zones of parking and the drive aisle. Clean-cut stone wheel stops with engraved designations only add to the precise details in this unique parking lot. Crepe myrtles line the eastern perimeter of the site near one of the zones of parking while ivy was planted on the building opposite the crepe myrtles.

Between the carport and the street is a modern galvanized steel fence with slim vertical posts for security for the gallery. Steel lettering of the gallery's name and address sits like decoration on top of the fence, only visible to the pedestrian. In front of the fence, grass berms sit in steel planters about waist high, outlined in crushed granite. All the elements in this design are supportive to the carport. They create both a background and foreground for the star of the show, the carport.

The carport is more than just a shading device for a parking lot. "It's a wink in the urban landscape," Kyle says. The space was designed to also function as an impromptu outdoor social gathering space. The project was chosen for one of the TSA awards because it accomplished exactly what Kyle intended. "It's singular. It has personality. It narrates; it says something about the place," commented said juror Mary Margaret Jones, FASLA. "And it's just a project that makes you happy to be in the city. It makes you want to be part of a very varied streetscape."

Jenny Kiel works with Bailey Architects in Houston.



RESOURCES ARCHITECTURAL METAL WORK: Metal Railing of America; VINYL GRAPHIC: Superior Projects