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In making the award, the judges noted the difficulty in designing a gallery inside an existing building. Above, Scogins Elam principals B. Mack Scogin Jr., left, Lloyd B. Bray and Merrill L. Elam, in the gallery at the Georgia-Pacific Center

Scogin Elam Wins Award From AIA

BY TOM CHAFFIN
STAFF REPORTER

For the first time since 1966, a Georgia-based architectural firm has won the national American Institute of Architects (AIA) prestigious Honor Award, the organization's highest prize.

Atlanta's Scogin Elam and Bray Architects Inc. won the prize for its interior design of the Georgia-Pacific Center's High Museum branch.

The award to Scogin Elam is one of 15 to be given by the AIA this year. The prize will be presented formally at the AIA's national convention later this

month in New York. The AIA announced the awards last week.

The now-defunct Atlanta firm of Toombs, Amisano and Wells—the last Georgia firm to win the prize—took an Honor Award in 1966 for its design of Marietta's John Knox Presbyterian Church.

The Scogin Elam office opened in 1984 as Parker and Scogin Architects Inc. Since the 1986 departure of firm principal W. Ennis Parker Jr., the office has operated under its current name.

The firm's three principals are B. Mack Scogin Jr., Merrill L. Elam and Lloyd B.

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Despite Client's Wishes, Counsel To Argue Against Death Sentence

BY KATIE WOOD
STAFF REPORTER

Percy J. Blount of Augusta's Glover & Blount is scheduled to argue a death-penalty appeal Tuesday before the Georgia Supreme Court and he's not quite sure what he is going to say.

Blount's client, Earnest Ulyesses Morrison, pleaded guilty Oct. 30, 1987, to the murder, rape and armed robbery of Edna Mary Griffin.

Then Morrison asked Superior Court Judge Albert M. Pickett of the Augusta

For the complete schedule of oral arguments before the Georgia Supreme Court this week, see Page 7.

Judicial Circuit to impose the death sentence.

The judge complied, but Morrison's case is among those on this week's oral argument calendar because Georgia law provides for an automatic appeal of all death sentences. *Earnest Ulyesses Morrison v. State*, Case No. 45572.

"There's just nothing to say," Blount said of the eight-page brief he filed with the Supreme Court asking the justices to review the conviction and sentence for error.

Briefs in death-penalty appeals usually are voluminous, enumerating page after page of alleged trial court errors. But Blount alleges just three in his appeal, and offers little support for his contentions.

"You have a difficult time picking out the error when your client, who you say is competent, goes in and waives all of it on the record," Blount said.

"It's really a difficult situation to be in. This is not a situation a lawyer likes to be in. I like to be on one side or the other. You like to have something to talk about. I don't have anything to talk about."

Blount's primary contention in the brief, in which he refers to himself as "your writer," is that Morrison's guilty plea may not have been as voluntary as it appeared to the trial court.

Blount—who was appointed to represent Morrison in addition to another

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Georgia-Pacific Gallery Design Cited By AIA

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Bray. All three were formerly with the Atlanta firm now called Heery International Inc.

Although Scogin Elam won the AIA prize for their High Museum branch, they did not design the actual office tower that houses the museum. The 52-story Georgia-Pacific Center, which opened in 1982, was designed by the New York office of Chicago's Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

The three-tiered museum, with its light-splashed walls of wood and gypsum board, contains museum offices, a bookstore, exhibit-preparation space and 4,200 square feet of exhibition space. The building-within-a-building is housed within a greenhouse-like, shed roof of glass-and-steel mullions that are built into the building's southern base.

The space was originally designed by Skidmore, Owings to accommodate a planned, but never built, permanent exhibit of industrial-wood technologies. By the time of the office tower's completion in 1986, however, Georgia-Pacific executives had lost interest in their original idea. The exhibit space thus lay dormant and unfinished for four years.

During that limbo, however, Georgia-Pacific executives initiated talk with local political leaders and the High Museum of Art concerning the use of the space as an art museum.

Those exchanges eventually led to a joint venture by the two owners of Georgia-Pacific Center—the Georgia-Pacific Corp. and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. The joint-venture partners developed the museum space and now provide it rent-free to the High Museum.

The Georgia-Pacific Center space is used to exhibit both travelling exhibits, as well as items from the museum's permanent collection. Scogin Elam principal Elam recalls her work on the project's original conception. "It had to be museum-quality space, not just a gallery space," she recalls.

Beyond problems related to light and humidity, she says, there was another challenge: "How do you make it a place that [is] its own, that feels like it's apart from—separate from—the rest of the office building?"

The nine-person AIA jury, in awarding the prize, praised the High Museum design as "a wonderful example of architectural inventiveness, demonstrating how imagination and skill can overcome extreme challenges and constrictive problems."

"Confronted with the challenge of placing an art museum in an existing narrow greenhouse space, which by its nature is antithetical to the display and viewing of art, the architects have built a remarkable building within a building—an elegant and beautiful envelope in which to explore the museum's collection."

Since opening its doors four years ago, Scogin Elam quietly has put its imprint on the metro area with a number of mid-

sized to small projects. Those include the just-completed Headquarters Library for the Clayton County library system in Jonesboro; the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce headquarters in downtown Atlanta; and the Buckhead branch of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, on which construction will soon begin.

Asked to explain the firm's apparent predilection for projects of relatively modest scale, firm principal Scogin jokes, "When you're in business for three years, that's what you get."

More seriously, he adds, "We're not trying to get real big real quick. We're trying to get work that allows us to exercise our personal skills and interests."

Scogin adds that the firm is currently embarked on a project of a somewhat larger scale than those which, up until now, have characterized his office. That

"We don't profess any dogma or position about architecture other than we do architecture that seeks to respond to the conditions of our day and culture."

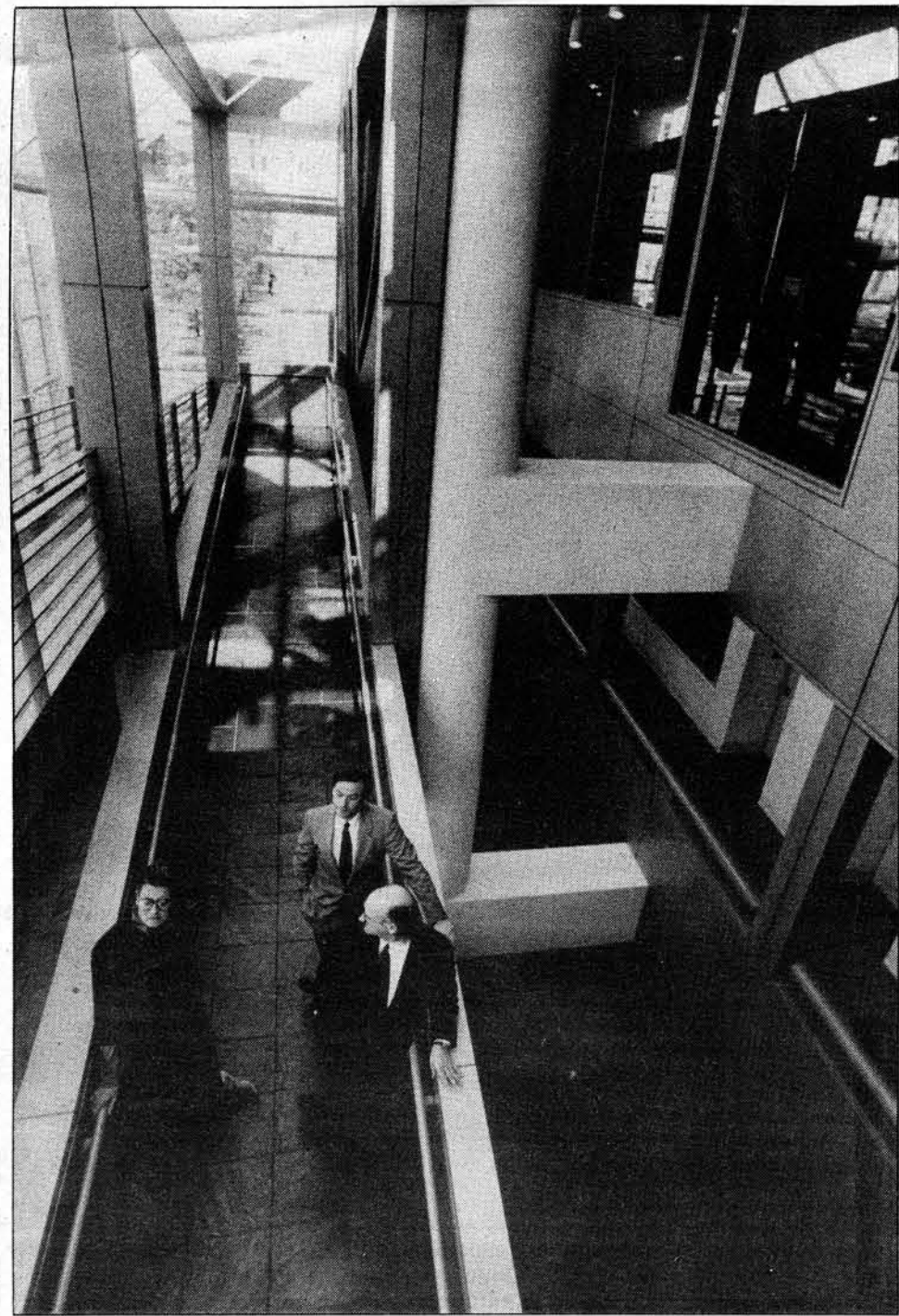
SCOGIN ELAM PRINCIPAL
B. MACK SCOGIN JR.

project calls for the renovation of 13 garden-apartment buildings and the construction of two new buildings, all on Clifton Road, for Emory University's Candler School of Theology.

What is now Scogin Elam began its operations four years ago with two architects and a receptionist. The firm now employs 14 people—including 12 architects. Despite that growth, Elam says, the firm has tried to retain an informal and personal atmosphere.

The office, he says, eschews traditional professional distinctions between those who design and those who produce working blueprints. "Everybody who works here is a designer. Everyone here works here on all aspects of a project—from design to production."

Scogin declines to categorize either the style or tradition in which the firm works. "We don't profess any dogma or position about architecture other than we do architecture that seeks to respond to the conditions of our day and culture," he says.



Scogin Elam and Bray principals Merrill L. Elam, left, Lloyd B. Bray and B. Mack Scogin Jr. in the High Museum's branch gallery at the Georgia-Pacific Center downtown.

"We've been called everything from postmodernists to deconstructionists and expressionist. But I think it's impossible to describe our projects like that."

Veteran Atlanta architect Kemp Mooney of Kemp Mooney Associates Architects Inc. likewise declines to categorize the work of the Scogin Elam office. With many designers—such as Richard Meier or Ludwig Mies Van de Rohe—says Mooney, a "thread of design continuity" runs through all works.

That doesn't happen with Scogin Elam designs, says Mooney, adding that each of the firm's projects seems to suggest its own style.

"I think what they've been doing has been an investigation into ways to make architecture excel with the opportunities that are available to them."

Heery International principal George Heery offers similar praise. "I congratulate them," he says. "It was an interesting solution in that it was an architectural element within an existing building and I think it was handled very sensitively and very nicely."

The Georgia-Pacific High Museum design had garnered several other prizes for the firm—including the South Atlantic Region AIA Honor Award and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission Award of Excellence.

In making its Honor Award to Scogin Elam, the national AIA cited the firm's three principals, Scogin, Bray and Elam, as well as design colleagues George Johnston, John Lauer, Isabelle Millet, Gil Rampy and Dick Spangler. It also cites W. Ennis Parker Jr., who served as project director. Parker is now president of Robert and Company/A-E, the architectural and engineering firm in Atlanta.

Principals Scogin and Elam have been married since 1974.

Other AIA Honor Award winners this year include the Monterey Bay Aquarium, in Monterey, Calif., by Escherick Homsey Dodge and Davis of San Francisco, and the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York, designed by I.M. Pei & Partners of New York. New York's James Stewart Polshek and Partners won an award for their restoration of Carnegie Hall.

The AIA Honor Award program was established in 1949 to recognize excellence in architectural design by U.S.-registered

architects. It is the highest prize awarded by the AIA.

Since the prize was established, a total of 569 awards have been made—six for buildings in Georgia. Last year, Princeton, N.J.-based Michael Graves won for his interior redesign of Emory University's Michael C. Carlos Hall.

In 1984, New York's Richard Meier & Partners won for their design for the main High Museum. Other awards for Georgia projects were given in 1950, 1951, 1960 and 1966.

This year's 15 Honor Award winners were chosen from among 512 submissions, according to an AIA spokesperson. □