The Architect
Women in Contemporary Architecture
Merrill Elam received a bachelor of arts in architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1971 and a master's in business administration at Georgia State University in 1983. In 1984, Elam, together with Mack Scogin, Ernie Parker, and Lloyd Bray, founded Parkin and Scogin Architects in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1986 the firm was reorganized as Scogin Elam Bray Architects, Inc., and then in 2000 became Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, Inc. Elam's work has received national and regional awards and international recognition. She has served as an adjudicator for academic and professional organizations and has lectured and taught at universities throughout the United States. In 1991, she held the Louis Henner Sullivan Chair in Architecture at the University of Illinois in Chicago. In the 1991-1992 academic year, she was the Harry S. Shure Professor at the University of Virginia and the William Wayne Caudill Visiting Lecturer at Rice University.

Elam is a corporate member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), a founding member and past president of the Architecture Society of Atlanta, past president and member of the Georgia State Board of Architects, and a past member of the board of directors of Art Papers. Selected Awards:

- Georgia AIA Design Award, 1999, 1997
- Architectural Record Interiors Award, 1996
- Chrysler Award for Innovation, Chrysler Corporation, 1996
- Academy Award in Architecture, American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1997
- Georgia AIA Award for Excellence in Architecture, 1993, 1990
- Silver Medal for Consistent Pursuit and Achievement in Architectural Design, Atlanta Chapter of the AIA, 1989

Selected Publications:


FIRM PROFILE

Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, Inc. is organized around the complementary skills of the two principals, Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam, both of whom participate in all projects on a daily basis. They have extensive experience in the formation and leadership of multidisciplinary project teams and, in particular, in the understanding of large projects and organizations to a personal practice in architecture.

All staff members are architects or interns, and the collaborative work is diverse in size, type, and location. In addition to architecture, services offered by the firm include graphic design, exhibition design, and interior design, planning, and programming.

Prior to founding Mack Scogin Merrill Elam, the principals worked with a third principal, Lloyd Bray, as part of Scogin Elam Bray Architects, also based in Atlanta. The three worked together for more than twenty-five years, starting with tenures at Heery and Heery Architects in Atlanta, a large, multidisciplinary architectural and construction management firm. While executing design and management work for project types ranging from airports and hospitals to corporate and industrial complexes, Elam and Scogin gained extensive experience in the techniques of controlling the time, cost, and project delivery processes for multifaceted, demanding projects. This experience, combined with an unyielding commitment to meeting the needs of clients with inventive architecture, which distinguishes the firm's work, means that the clients of Mack Scogin Merrill Elam expect innovative design with a mature approach to the practical constraints of architecture. The firm's involvement in the design community goes beyond mere problem solving to questions that address architecture's larger role in today's society.

Project types range from educational institutions, public libraries, and arts facilities to corporate and residential structures. Current and recent work includes the Schwinn Building in Brooklyn, Massachusetts; the Knowlton School of Architecture at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio; Herman Miller Georgia Operations Consolidation in Cherokee County, Georgia; and the Lee B. Hallman Branch Library in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Selected Clients:

- Arizona State University Board of Regents
- Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System
- The City of Atlanta/COA
- Clayton County Library Board of Trustees
- Corning Enterprises, Inc.
- Don and Sylvia Shaw Salon and Spa
- Georgia-Pacific Corporation
- Hermann-Miller, Inc.
- The Ohio State University
- Tufts University
- Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.
- University of California, Berkeley

DESIGN STATEMENT

"The Design Challenge." Although individual design challenges are bound up in and met during the making of discrete projects, "the design challenge," as a general concept, belongs to the greater project, which is architecture itself. Architecture questions what and how, how, and to what end, but in terms that transcend specific projects. The fact that the answers to questions arising from the most recently completed constructions are never completely satisfactory or adequate attests to the ever-present, insistent challenge of the project of architecture.

ILLUSTRATED PROJECTS

- John J. Ross-William C. Blackley Law Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 1992
- Carol Cobb Turner Branch Library, Morgantown, Georgia, 1991
- Montgomery Residence, Lowell, Maine, 1997
- Don and Sylvia Shaw Salon and Spa, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995
- 64 Wakefield, Atlanta, Georgia, ongoing

"The search for broader meanings and possibilities is the phenomenon of architecture that continues to fascinate us."
John J. Reilly-William C. Bieleke Law Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona: 1 East elevation, showing the dynamic forms of the new law library, located on the fringe of the orthogonally planned campus; 2 An "assembly" plaza links the existing law school and the new library, creating a law campus within the larger university campus; 3 Interior view of circulation desk and entry area. Forms and spaces are organized over and around distinct functions. Exterior and interior work in concert to modulate the intense Arizona sun, providing myriad architectural experiences. Photo credit: Timothy Hursley

Coral Gables Turner Branch Library, Miami, Florida: 1 Detail with children's handprints. Exterior walls are of glass and Georgia red clay-colored synthetic stucco; 2 Detail at children's area. Just outside is a small garden and reflecting dish; 3 East elevation. The asymmetrical plan has a dividing breezeway corridor with rooms off both sides, skewed up toward the bright blue sky and away from the flat, heat-filled, hostile site. Connections to other community buildings and neighborhoods, the points of the compass, and property lines all give form to the building. A vertical steel and glass tower serves as a negative center support, from which the mushroom-like roof emerges on a simple post-and-beam structure. Photo credit: Timothy Hursley
[Below] Don and Sylvia Shaw Salon Spa, Atlanta, Georgia: 1 View of entry. The atmosphere is clean and sparkly but quiet and private, allowing each client to be moved from pleasant to pleasant while feeling the sole occupant of the spa. 2 Detail of stairwell that separates upper level of manicures and pedicures from lower level of more extended services. Photo credit: Timothy Hurstley.