

As the first step in a phased expansion, the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, CT, added a new main entrance both to enliven a dated, 30-year-old building and to reflect the center's mission.

"The Children's Museum has an emphasis on both art and science," explained Lawrence A. Chan, AIA, a principal with Chan Krieger & Associates in Cambridge, MA. "It features exhibits on fine arts as well as interactive science exhibits. As such, we wanted the architecture to be supportive of the mission of the museum."

The 5,670-sq.-ft. entrance hall consists of a new entrance and arrival court, a multi-level lobby to receive and orient visitors, a central public stair, an exhibit gallery, a classroom, and a complete renovation and upgrade of the existing mechanical and fire protection system.

Construction cost on the project was \$925,000, with the mechanical system adding an additional \$395,000.

The most dramatic portion of the new addition is the main entrance and stair, which is housed in a steel and glass block box. "We wanted to use the material as a teaching element," Chan explained. "We chose the material and color palette carefully so that as you walk up the stairs, the light changes and it becomes an interactive experience." The choice of colors for the rest of the addition, which con-

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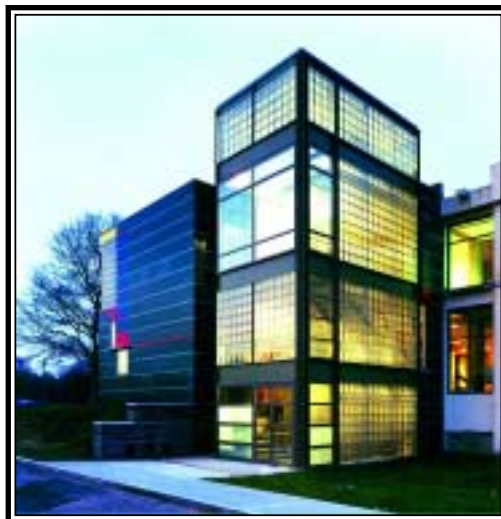
*National Winner*

## The Discovery Museum Entrance Hall



sists of glazed brick, also was carefully considered to bring life to the existing structure. The architecture is designed to evoke a sense of wonder about the place—indeed about architecture itself—as an important exemplar of the union of art and science. The design help to provoke the curiosity that young people bring to learning.

Design elements include: articulation of the structure; expressing opaque and transparent geometric volumes;



*Inside and out, during the day and at night, the new main entrance hall creates an interactive space to be explored.  
Photography by Peter Vanderwarker*



### ***Juror's Comments:***

*The detailing and composition of materials is meticulously handled on both the exterior and interior of the structure.*

*This building speaks volumes to children with delightful chapters on color, movement, scale, proportion and, ultimately, architecture itself.*



abstracting the patterns of a polychromatic palette; layering and refracting translucent surfaces; and filtering and manipulating the selective use of natural light—its radiance, transmittance, reflection and shadow.

As with the glass block, the use of exposed steel was designed as a learning experience. “We wanted to show that it wasn’t just a stair or a room, but also a structure. We wanted to show the beams connecting to the columns and how the structure is supported.”

Early in the design phase, it was suggested that the exterior steel be clad for weather protection and insulation. “But cladding looked clunky. Also, if we had clad the exterior, there would be no relationship between the inside and outside

if one side was exposed and the other covered.”

The inside of the new lobby consists of glass, exposed steel and terrazzo floor tile and birch plywood wall cladding. “The pattern and color of the tile picks up and plays off the pattern of the glass and steel,” Chan explained. “We paid a lot of attention to details. Even the spacing of the stiffeners in the columns was carefully considered.”

### **Project Team**

**Project:** The Discovery Museum Entrance Hall, Bridgeport, CT

**Architect:** Chan Krieger & Associates, Cambridge, MA

**Owner:** The Discovery Museum

**Structural Engineer:** Kasper Associates, Inc., Bridgeport, CT

**AISC Member Structural Steel Fabricator:** Post Road Iron Works, Inc., Greenwich, CT

**Construction Manager:** Philip Helms, P.E., Boston

**General Contractor:** Shankle Construction, Trumbull, CT