

*Innovative Design and
Excellence in Architecture with Steel*

Honorable Mention

Spencer Theater for the
Performing Arts



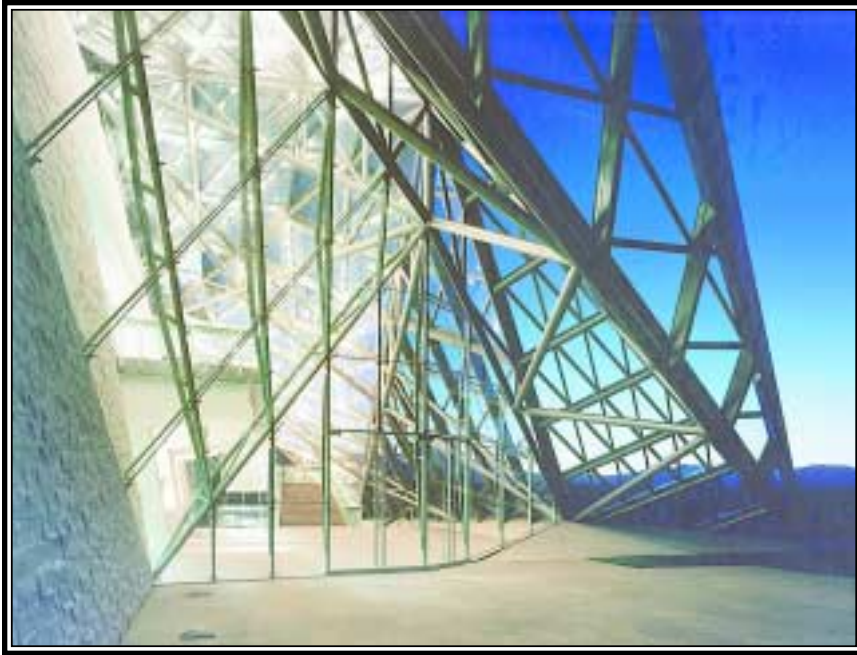
THE SPENCER THEATER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS IS SITUATED ON A HIGH MESA near Ruidoso, NM, overlooking the Capitan Mountains and Sierra Blanca peak. Since its opening in October 1997, the 514-seat theater has become a cultural landmark in New Mexico. Along with its summer and winter performance seasons, the theater also hosts free performances by students during the month of April. It is also home to three permanent installations by glass artist Dale Chihuly

When designing the structure, the owner and architect were looking for a design that would be a convergence of “the theater of landscape and the theater of performance.” The site, situated in the middle of the Fort Stanton Mesa in southern New Mexico, stands dead center between

Juror's Comments:

The Performing Arts Theater is an extremely dynamic composition. The juxtaposition of the fragile steel and glass structure leaning against the monolithic mother ship is dramatic. The enclosed space is light and airy and the drama played out between the glass, steel and masonry whets one's appetite for the performance within.

What is striking about this project is the delicate use of steel and glass as a counterpoint to the massive body of the theater. The dynamics created between site theater and entry are spectacular.



Project Team

Project: Spencer Theater for the Performing Arts (Alto, NM)

Architect: Antoine Predock Architect, Albuquerque, NM

Owner: Spencer Theater

Structural Engineer: Paragon Structural Design, Inc., Phoenix, AZ

General Contractor: PCL Construction Services, Inc., Denver, CO



Sunset peak on the east horizon and Sierra Blanca peak to the west, along the axis of the summer sun. Sierra Blanca becomes the initial locus for the building's form and position, a sculpted limestone mass that has been excavated into exact relationships between light, views, performance and procession.

The wedge like form of the theater, a seemingly monolithic piece of stone, symbolically forces its way up from beneath the fragile crust of the mesa. Lodged within a fissure, and erupting from the north flank, a crystalline, chandelier-like shell of laminated glass links the vertical procession to the upper lobby and entry to the

theater house. This faceted glass entry consciously subverts the mass of the body of the building.

The lobby is constructed from a standard aluminum framed skylight system supported by a three-dimensional steel frame. Due to the placement of the structure within the lobby, and the desire to maintain the lightest appearing structure possible, the design of the frame was undertaken in heavy wall pipe. It presents the smallest aspect from all vantage points. Components were shop fabricated in the largest transportable sections and field assembled to form the three-dimensional structure that is a dramatic architectural element. The steel components are finished in a metallic gray paint. Backstage, most of the structural steel frame is exposed and forms an integral part of the theater rigging system.