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INDesign 2011

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Celebrating the best of architecture, interiors and landscapes in Acadiana. By The Independent Staff

It's time once again for the annual — yes, we know, we skipped 2010 — INDesign Awards honoring the finest in architecture, interior design and landscape architecture in Acadiana. The entries this year, like every year, were wide-ranging both stylistically and geographically, from major new projects like the Acadiana Center for the Arts in Lafayette to an off-the-radar renovation in Eunice that transformed and gave new purpose to a historic space. What these winners — gold, silver and bronze — share in common is a vision unique to south Louisiana coupled with an abiding respect for the forms and techniques of the past.

Our judges for this year's INDesign Awards bring a wealth of experience and talent to their respective fields.

W. Geoff Gjertson, an architect and associate professor at UL Lafayette, is co-director of the Building Institute and is both an award-winning private architect and a widely published, highly respected academic.

Painter and landscape architect Lue Svendson has designed landscapes around the world, and her much-coveted work on canvass has hung in more than 20 exhibitions in south Louisiana.

Beth Miller is a licensed interior designer and director of the Interior Design Program at Mississippi State University who has collected an impressive array of state and regional awards.

The Independent Weekly extends a hearty thank you to our judges for their time and diligence in winnowing down a dauntingly creative list of candidate projects into what are this year's honorees.

Those winners will be fêted at 11:45 a.m. Thursday, May 19, at City Club during the INDesign Awards Luncheon. Tickets are \$40 a piece or \$350 for a table of eight. For details or to purchase tickets, contact Robin Hebert at (337) 769-8603 or via email at robinh@theind.com.

In the meantime, following are profiles of the INDesign 2011 Gold Medal winners.



Architecture — Historic Preservation

St. Mary Magdalene Church

The Sellers Group

Architect Gene Sellers doesn't take the collection plate lightly. A parishioner at Abbeville's St. Mary Magdalene Church, Sellers often serves as lector during Mass. Following Hurricane Lili in 2002 and taking a lead from the church's pastor, Fr. William Blanda, Sellers began an almost decade-long project in three phases to restore the century-old house of worship to its early 20th-century form.

Lili destabilized the church's steeple, sending a chunk of masonry onto the roof, which precipitated a leak that had a cascading effect on the structure's integrity.

Thus began a series of capital campaigns spearheaded by Blanda. Phase One replaced the steeple and roof. Custom-formed copper designed to withstand hurricane winds took the place of asbestos shingles. Phase Two saw a complete exterior renovation including restoration of the church's stained glass. Phase Three addressed the church's interior, including the installation of furnishings salvage from a New Orleans church closed in a diocesan consolidation and new paintings.

St. Mary Magdalene had been renovated in the 1960s and, in a time before the concept of historic preservation had any currency, "modernized."

During Phase Three, from Easter to Christmas 2009, the church was closed. But Sellers was there, serving as lector, for the rededication Mass, putting a seal on a very personal project.

"I actually did the whole job, all of the phases, for free," Sellers reluctantly confesses. "It was completely pro bono. I did it because I just wanted to."

In addition to a 2011 INDesign Gold Award for historic preservation, the St. Mary Magdalene project also won a "Special Award" from the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation.