

Holy Rosary Catholic Church Complex

St. Amant, LA



Team

Owner:

Holy Rosary Catholic Church, St. Amant, LA

Architect:

Trahan Architects, Baton Rouge, LA

Engineer:

Schrenk & Peterson Consulting Engineers,
New Orleans, LA

General and Concrete Contractor:

Quality Design and Construction, Inc.
Gonzales, LA

Reinforcing Bar Fabricator:

Loftland Company (CMC Steel Group)

Blast Design:

Weidlinger Associates

Total Project Cost:

\$2.4 million

Total Project Size:

17,076 sq ft

Photography:

Feldman Architects.

The campus master plan unifies all Parish functions through a coherent organizational system, while drawing a clear distinction between the program's sacred and secular programs. Secular components of the campus take the form of linear "edge" pavilions composed to frame a courtyard, or sacred precinct, where the Oratory is found. Moving in a clockwise direction, the promenade around the interior lawn leads ultimately to the Oratory. In the opposite direction, the path offers the complementary experience of moving by degrees from the intensely spiritual center back into the community. The architectural character of the composition was the product of an honest exploration of form, function, natural light and materials. The resulting visual understatement was considered to create a quietness, focusing attention away from the architecture and toward the purpose of the church and a relationship with its setting.

STRUCTURAL FRAMING SYSTEM

Site-cast reinforced concrete provided a strong image and was carefully shaped and detailed to transcend its industrial stereotype. Moreover, a deliberate effort to avoid decorative symbols or ornament overtly signaling status, directs attention to material treatment. In the context of the striking simplicity, material is promoted to a poetic and symbolic level.

Cast-in-place concrete was chosen for the outer most wall of the complex to give weight to the act of initiating edge. While two-dimensional when approached from the exterior, these boundary markers reveal a space-defining role as the enclosing perimeter wall generating a sense of stability and shelter in the academic and administrative pavilions. The special edge making function of this plane is asserted on the interior by a spatial separation of ceiling/roof plane, allowing a wash of natural illumination to add warmth to the wall while making its presence more vivid.

Concrete application at the Oratory is distinct from the edge pavilions. Monolithic and massiveness enhance purity of object and the creation of a distinctly abstract interior volume expressive of the mystery represented in sacred ceremony. The qualities of glass, specifically the transparency, clarity and fragility of plate glass and the obscured luminosity and textural properties of cast glass are used in sculptural tension with the density, mass and opacity of concrete.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING REINFORCED CONCRETE

To create the irregular shaped cavities of the Oratory apertures, void geometry was digitally modeled and then milled from high-density foam using digitally controlled milling machines. Each of the foam moulds was wrapped with laminate to withstand the forces of concrete placement and produce the desired smooth semi-reflective finish. Eliminating internal form ties through the use of an externally braced cantilevered forming system made space available within the primary formwork for anchoring the foam forms.

The collaborative exchange fostered from this relationship made it possible to achieve extremely high levels of concrete workmanship and produced distinctive custom resolutions to challenging constructions conditions.

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