



bjarko serra architects' church addition, seattle, washington

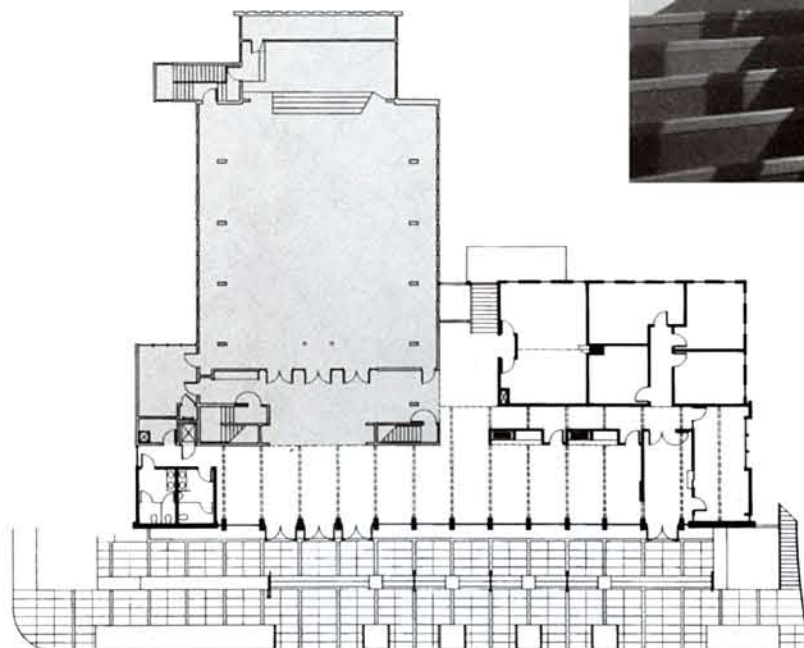
"This form demonstrates volumetric success...severe and simple, artfully contrasted with comfort, beauty, and ease of the congregation within," commented Craig Hodgetts, one of the jurors of the AIA Honor Awards, on the First Christian Reformed Church by BjarkoSerra Architects. Commissioned by a fellow Montana State University classmate who was a member of the congregation, BjarkoSerra designed their subtle stroke of introducing a narthex, multipurpose room, and administrative space in their two-story addition, including a daylight basement, to the existing church.

The all-embracing addition retains the structure and roof profile of the original building and includes coordination around an existing concrete framed mechanical room. The new circulation core on the east side features a steel stair structure with pre-cast concrete treads and landings with mahogany risers. Careful coordination with the mechanical engineer allowed the designers to minimize the addition's floor-to-floor height to save on construction costs. On a more serene spiritual level, the front elevation takes on the distinctive characteristics of a Japanese woodcut with its foreground narthex, the existing gable serving as middle ground framing the distant treetops.

Greg Bjarko and Chris Serra first met in Bozeman, Montana as architecture students and with a few of their classmates, struck out west upon graduating. Following experiences with architectural firms in both Los Angeles and Seattle they established Bjarko Serra Architects in 1992. Their work encompasses many project types including single-family residences, multi-unit housing, retail centers, banks, churches, office buildings, space planning, day care centers, and institutional buildings. Over the last ten years the firm has grown to include commercial, institutional, and residential projects in Washington and Montana.

Chris describes their design approach "as deeply committed to the site, working with their clients through the planning stages, and collectively formulating a strong idea" which then underscores their design decisions. Greg Bjarko adds that their vision serves, "to provide client's with projects, which exceed expectations and form a lasting contribution to the individual users and the community." The recently completed 42nd Street Condos, which were honored with an AIA Home of the Month award in November, illustrate this design approach perfectly.

Kai-Uwe Bergmann practices architecture with Weinstein Copeland Architects.



West elevation, Fred Housel.
Detail of interior stair, Chris Serra.
Left, 2nd floor plan with
pre-existing conditions in grey.