

Project Description

Project Identity and Location

Pomona College Studio Arts Hall, Claremont, California

Purpose of Project

Home to drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and digital arts courses, this building (designed by wHY Architects) sits on the south eastern edge of campus adjacent to a large native Oak stand. The building allows daylight and green views to flood the studios and invites passerby to view artists at work. The structure hovers above a central courtyard designed to maximize flexibility and to give students and faculty generous space to gather and make or exhibit art in the landscape.

Role of Landscape Architect

The building is about teaching and doing art. And it is surely an artful structure. The swooping roof envelopes a complex and discreet set of volumes each of which is home to one of the art forms. From the onset it was clear that we needed to respond to the complex program and site in an artful way. We studied the topography of the site and the adjacent Oak woodland to understand natural movements of water through the site. A notion of flow and erosion led to the development of modular paving system that erodes at its edges to form green spaces...a painterly weaving between hard and soft. Plantings were chosen to engage the attention of artists. Sustainable goals were met.

Significance

This building took us out of our comfort zone. Our first responses as to how to tackle this design somehow wouldn't work with the intersection of this building and this land. So, like artists, we worked hard to listen and create a response that met the level of thought and craft that was being unleashed on the architecture. Along the way we had to allow the landscape to unite the building with its surroundings which range from a beaux arts inspired academic core of the campus to the oak woodland to the east.

Special Factors

The hardscape design was a rigorous exercise to both design and detail. Many studies and, ultimately, many mockups led to the high levels of quality and finish. It has been amazing and quite gratifying to visit the building post occupancy and observe the way the students use the courtyard for both making and displaying art.