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- PRACTICE
- CULTURE
- AWARDS
- EVENTS
- CONTINUING ED
- AIA
- Q

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[Home](#) > [Practice](#) > 2018 Architect 50: Top 50 Firms in Design

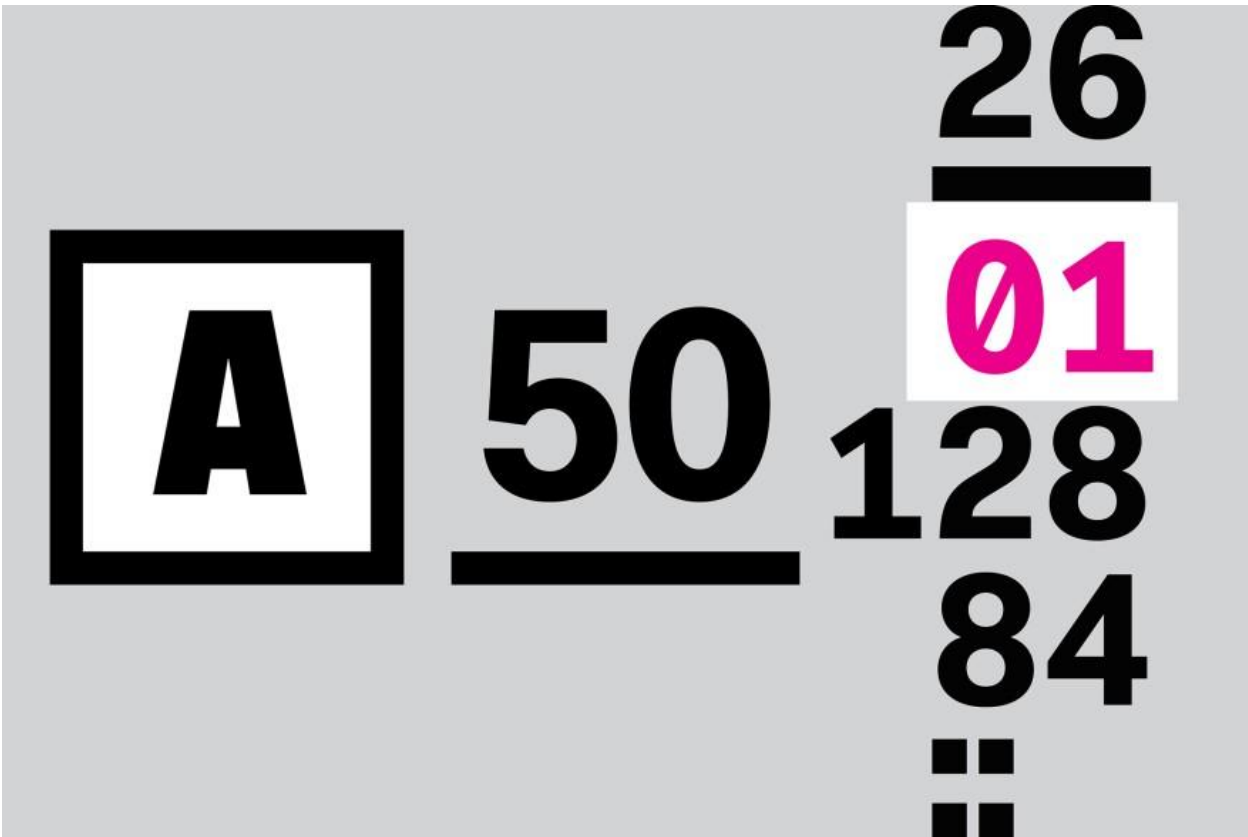
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2018 ARCHITECT 50

2018 Architect 50: Top 50 Firms in Design

Lorcan O'Herlihy earns the top spot for its amplified urbanism.

By [DAVID HILL](#)



For Lorcan O’Herlihy, FAIA, founding principal of Los Angeles–based [Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects](#), buildings are not isolated objects. “Architecture is a social act,” he says. “When we design a building, we’re concerned about how it impacts the sidewalk and the street, and how it impacts the social and civic world.” His term for this approach: “Amplified urbanism.”

That philosophy—an especially forward-thinking one in sprawling LA—helped Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects earn the top spot in the design category of this year’s Architect 50. “Coherent and unique projects with tremendous range,” said the design judges about the firm’s portfolio. “The work possesses an impressive catalog of variation and invention concerning approaches to architectural identity.”



Bruce Damonte
UCSB San Joaquin Student Housing

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Sum of Parts

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Paul Vu
Mariposa1038

Consider the firm's design for MLK1101, a mixed-use housing complex for formerly homeless veterans located near LA's Exposition Park. The four-story, L-shaped building sits on a busy thoroughfare between a McDonald's and a bland low-rise apartment structure. Developed by the local nonprofit Clifford Beers Housing, MLK1101 includes ground-floor retail space and a central staircase that leads to an elevated courtyard for residents. There's a security gate at the top of the stairs, not on the sidewalk, a subtle design move that helps blur the line between the public and private realms. "The design strategies open the building toward the street and foster a sense of community within the neighborhood," O'Herlihy says.



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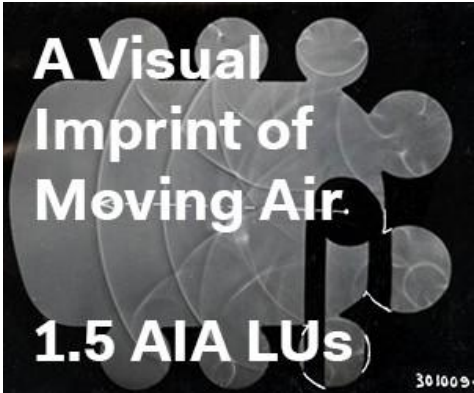
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Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA]

MLK1101

The firm brought a similar sensitivity to public space with its design of Mariposa1038, a market-rate apartment building in LA's Koreatown. It's a five-story box, but with a twist: the sides are all pushed inward to create concave façades. On the street-facing side, the result is a welcoming semi-public outdoor space between the sidewalk and the building.

The firm, which was founded in 1994 and is now 25 employees large, is also working on several projects in Detroit, including a renovation and expansion of the MBAD African Bead Museum and a mixed-use project called Big Box DD, which will be constructed in the Eastern Market neighborhood using modified shipping containers. It includes flexible space for retail, food vendors, and co-working spaces.



Lorcan O'Herlihy [LOHA]

Big Box DD



Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA]

Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA, principal of Brooks + Scarpa (number two in this year’s list of top design firms) and a longtime friend of O’Herlihy’s (they’ve collaborated on three projects), praises the architect for taking a “fairly mundane program like housing” and coming up with a fresh slant. “Every project is different,” Scarpa says. “He’s always searching, always looking for new ideas. And he has the tenacity to get stuff done. When everyone says, ‘No you can’t,’ Lorcan says, ‘Yes I can, and here’s how.’ And he does it with grace and style and beauty.”

The Top 50 Firms in Design

RANK	1
ORGANIZATION	Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects
SCORE	100.0

RANK	2
ORGANIZATION	Brooks+Scarpa
SCORE	97.7

RANK	3
ORGANIZATION	LTL Architects
SCORE	92.8

RANK	4
ORGANIZATION	Rice+Lipka
SCORE	91.7

RANK	5
ORGANIZATION	Marlon Blackwell Architects
SCORE	90.8

RANK	6
ORGANIZATION	Anmahian Winton Architects
SCORE	89.3

RANK	7
ORGANIZATION	HGA
SCORE	88.3

RANK	8
ORGANIZATION	Archimania
SCORE	88.2

RANK	9
ORGANIZATION	Trahan Architects
SCORE	88.0

RANK	10
ORGANIZATION	nArchitects
SCORE	84.4

RANK	11
ORGANIZATION	NADAAA
SCORE	83.7

RANK	12
ORGANIZATION	CannonDesign

SCORE	82.7
RANK	13
ORGANIZATION	Studio Gang
SCORE	80.0
RANK	14
ORGANIZATION	El Dorado
SCORE	79.6
RANK	15
ORGANIZATION	WRNS Studio
SCORE	78.8
RANK	16
ORGANIZATION	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
SCORE	77.6
RANK	16
ORGANIZATION	ZGF
SCORE	77.6
RANK	18
ORGANIZATION	Behnisch Architekten
SCORE	75.6
RANK	19
ORGANIZATION	Desai Chia Architecture
SCORE	75.4
RANK	20
ORGANIZATION	Eskew+Dumez+Ripple
SCORE	75.3
RANK	20
ORGANIZATION	Works Progress Architecture
SCORE	75.3
RANK	22
ORGANIZATION	Touloukian Touloukian
SCORE	74.5
RANK	23
ORGANIZATION	Adrian Smith+Gordon Gill
SCORE	73.7
RANK	24
ORGANIZATION	Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture
SCORE	73.4
RANK	25
ORGANIZATION	Lake Flato
SCORE	73.1

RANK	26
ORGANIZATION	Hacker
SCORE	72.5
RANK	27
ORGANIZATION	Ikon.5 Architects
SCORE	72.1
RANK	28
ORGANIZATION	SRG Partnership
SCORE	71.8
RANK	29
ORGANIZATION	Perkins+Will
SCORE	70.7
RANK	30
ORGANIZATION	Architecture Research Office
SCORE	70.2
RANK	31
ORGANIZATION	HKS
SCORE	70.0
RANK	31
ORGANIZATION	5G Studio Collaborative
SCORE	70.0
RANK	33
ORGANIZATION	TEN Arquitectos
SCORE	69.6
RANK	34
ORGANIZATION	LMN Architects
SCORE	69.2
RANK	35
ORGANIZATION	Tighe Architecture
SCORE	69.1
RANK	36
ORGANIZATION	Studio Ma
SCORE	69.0
RANK	37
ORGANIZATION	Solomon Cordwell Buenz
SCORE	68.8
RANK	38
ORGANIZATION	SmithGroup
SCORE	68.5
RANK	38
ORGANIZATION	BNIM

SCORE	68.5
RANK	40
ORGANIZATION	CBT Architects
SCORE	68.3
RANK	40
ORGANIZATION	Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects
SCORE	68.3
RANK	42
ORGANIZATION	Leddy Maytum Stacy
SCORE	68.2
RANK	43
ORGANIZATION	GO Logic
SCORE	67.6
RANK	43
ORGANIZATION	Hufft Projects
SCORE	67.6
RANK	45
ORGANIZATION	Payette
SCORE	67.3
RANK	46
ORGANIZATION	Overland Partners
SCORE	66.9
RANK	47
ORGANIZATION	FXCollaborative
SCORE	66.7
RANK	47
ORGANIZATION	CO Architects
SCORE	66.7
RANK	49
ORGANIZATION	Snow Kreilich
SCORE	66.6
RANK	50
ORGANIZATION	Ayers Saint Gross
SCORE	66.0

Design Judges



Ron Eshel

Michael Maltzan, FAIA, is the design principal of Michael Maltzan Architecture in Los Angeles. He is a recipient of the 2012 American Academy of Arts and Letters Architecture Award, and the 2016 AIA Los Angeles Gold Medal honoree.



Sioux Nesi

Claire Weisz, FAIA, is a founding principal of WXY in New York. She has received the Architectural League of New York’s Young Architects Award and its Emerging Voices Award with her firm. WXY won the 2016 AIA New York State Firm of the Year Award.



Chris Strong

Paul Andersen, AIA, is the director of Independent Architecture in Denver. He teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago and has been a guest curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver and the Biennial of the Americas.

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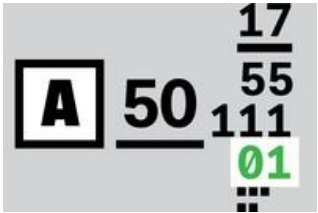


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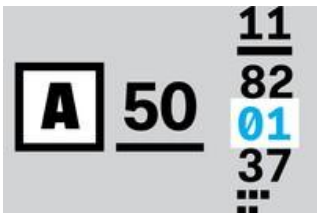
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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David Hill is a freelance writer and radio producer in Denver. He writes frequently about architecture, design, and urban planning for ARCHITECT and other publications.

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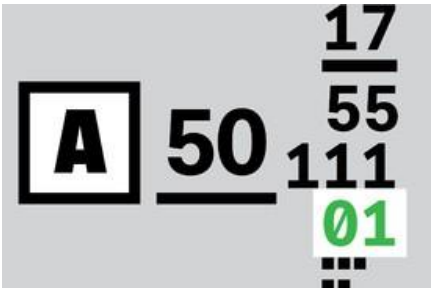
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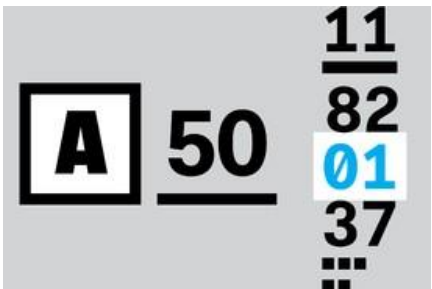
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