

THE TOP A-LIST ARCHITECTS BUILDING OUR FUTURE

# ELLE DECOR

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020

FIERCE  
AND  
FABULOUS!

INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN  
OF  
DESIGN

Filipa de Abreu  
in Portugal



INSPIRATION FOR YOUR RENOVATION

# BUILDER

A-LIST ARCHITECTURE

## Masters of the Universal

THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE IS **INCLUSIVITY**—FROM A THEATER WITH NO BAD SEATS TO COLORFUL WHEELCHAIR-FRIENDLY HOMES.

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY CHARLES CURKIN

### Trahan Architects

**COCA-COLA STAGE AT ALLIANCE THEATRE, WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER • ATLANTA**

*Once more for the cheap seats!* Can you imagine a theater where that tired joke couldn't land? That's just what Trahan Architects achieved with their newly finished 650-seat Coca-Cola Stage. The New Orleans-based firm sought to create a chamber with a strikingly modern aesthetic of sinuous strands of reclaimed oak while also making a performance space that is truly democratic, where all sounds—spoken words and musical notes alike—can be heard with the same intensity from any seat in the house. "We wanted to make everyone in the audience feel accepted and celebrated," says Trey Trahan, the company's founder. "Architecture should play a role in creating spaces that remind us to be, on the most basic level, kind to each other." The aural effect within the Coca-Cola Stage is the product of assiduously researched acoustical theories. Each half-inch strand of shaped wood was placed to meet the requirements of every seat. With only one balcony and rows pushed 10 feet closer to the stage than is typical, this theater proves that there's no longer shame in the back row. [trahanarchitects.com](http://trahanarchitects.com)



# A-LIST ARCHITECTURE

## Olin DEAFSCAPE

As a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, deaf landscape architect Alexa Vaughn came up with DeafScape not so much as a specific design, but as a guide to follow. "It is a tool to help dismantle barriers in the built environment that hinder deaf and disabled people from using public spaces," says Vaughn, now a practitioner at Olin, in Philadelphia. She envisioned a 10-foot-wide sidewalk, allowing adequate room for the hearing-impaired to stop to sign or lip-read, peppered with seating areas for longer conversations, tactile cues like raised bumps, and bright lighting at night. Her idea is universal and can easily be implemented for a vast array of indoor and outdoor spaces. "Disabled folks spend their lives adapting to architecture," she says. "It shouldn't be this way forever. The built environment should adapt to us." [theolinstudio.com](http://theolinstudio.com)



A rendering of DeafScape.



An accessible military house at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

## Michael Graves Architecture & Design

### ACCESSIBLE MILITARY HOUSING • FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

More than two and a half million United States soldiers have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq since 9/11, and the number of those coming back with emotional and physical injuries has been astronomical. The assignment for Graves was to create houses—more than 20 in all—for those affected servicemen and -women returning home. With external features that include inviting gables, lively colors, and the firm's signature porthole windows, the residences don't look at all like they're built for special needs. "We didn't want this thing to scream at you that it's for disabled people," says Thomas Rowe, a principal at the New Jersey-based firm. The interiors, however, are an object lesson in universal design, with wide corridors and open spaces for wheelchairs as well as calming acoustic details for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. [michaelgraves.com](http://michaelgraves.com)

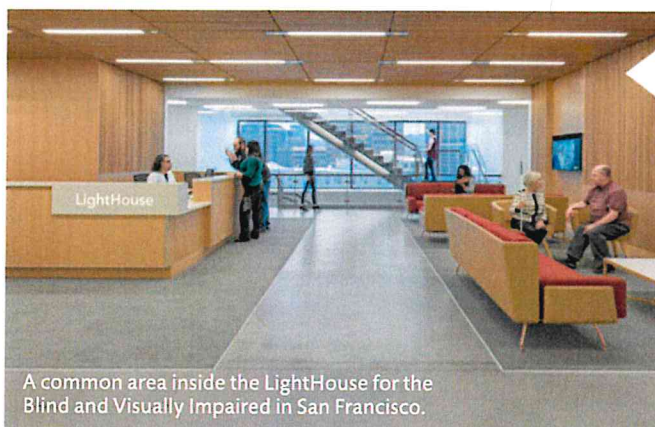
## Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects

### SWEETWATER SPECTRUM • SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

With Sweetwater, completed in 2013, this firm answered a question of growing concern: When their parents can no longer care for them, where will adults with autism live? "One thing you can count on is that kids on the autism spectrum will become adults on the autism spectrum," says Marsha Maytum, a principal at the San Francisco-based firm. "During the course of the project, the severity of this issue grew exponentially." (According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2018, one in 59 U.S. children was born on the spectrum.) For the 2.8-acre campus, Maytum and her team created an oasis of calm tones and patterns to soothe its residents' hypersensitivity, while balancing light and making connections to the natural landscape of Sonoma's heavenly environs. [lmsarch.com](http://lmsarch.com)



The Sweetwater Spectrum campus in Sonoma, California.



A common area inside the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco.

## Architecture for the Blind

### LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED SAN FRANCISCO

The Lighthouse organization, which helps the visually impaired become self-reliant, had maxed out its headquarters in 2014 when it brought in Chris Downey to help with an extension at a new location. Good choice: Downey has the distinction of being the only practicing fully blind architect in the United States. And he was a trained architect before he lost his sight, giving him unique expertise. The most significant element in the design is a concrete pathway throughout the complex to facilitate echolocation, or using reflected sound to navigate a room. "For those with little to no sight, other sensory aspects, like acoustics, come into play," Downey says. "We listen for all sorts of cues, which could be where other people are and the proportions of the room." [arch4blind.com](http://arch4blind.com)

MILITARY HOUSE: ALLEN RUSS/HOACHLANDER DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC; SWEETWATER AND ED ROBERTS CAMPUS: TIM GRIFFITH