



FEATURES: SPECIAL REPORT

CLOSE



# ARTISTIC REVIVAL

by Mindi Zissman, contributing writer

ARCHITECTURE IS THE NEWEST & OLDEST  
HOST OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



**CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORIC, NEW AND OLD, CREATIVE EXPRESSION IS WORKING** its way back into today's architectural landscape. "The modernist style from early last century was to strip all the ornament off the buildings. We're looking to turn the clock back a bit in a modern way," says Jay Brotman, AIA, partner, Svigals + Partners ([svigals.com](http://svigals.com)), New Haven, Conn. "We are going back to a time when people could express themselves on the building—we're incorporating art as part of the architecture."

As the mastermind behind the firm's art in architecture, Barry Svigals designs and creates in collaboration with other local and international artists to find the right forms of artistic expression for his high-performance schools.

"I am inspired by sculpture in architecture, a centuries-old tradition, which can serve as a meaningful and beautiful expression of the architecture," says Svigals, FAIA, partner, Svigals + Partners. "Figurative sculpture, in particular, has the power to engage people in an intimate relationship to their surroundings. It can bring to life the purpose and meaning of a building, enhancing its service to functional needs. Today, perhaps more than ever, we need this reminder of our humanity."

Svigals finds that sculpture, both integrated into the building's bricks and freestanding, is the best art medium for a building's exterior walls because its physical presence can be blended and incorporated easier into the shape of the structure. Fiberglass, cut metal and cement and masonry are all ideal materials for exterior use as well. On the inside of a building, paintings and murals can either be hung on or directly decorated onto the walls, while flooring or window film with die-cut shapes can also be used to create an integrated image.

**LOBBY FLOORING:** The Columbus Family Academy features the northern hemisphere constellations on Columbus Day, October 12th.



**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore  
Suntan Yellow 2155-50



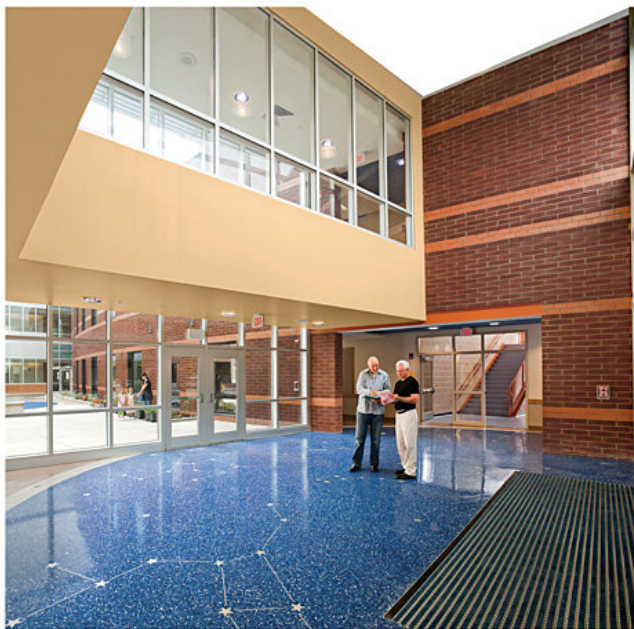
**FLOORING:** Envioglas Epoxy Terrazzo  
Blue 4362, White 4399



**BRICK:** Watstown Brick  
Sturbridge Smooth-Smooth Sanded



COLUMBUS FAMILY ACADEMY



PHOTOS: ROBERT PETERSON, REDUCED BY SVIGALS + PARTNERS

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-  **CANOPY CEILING:**  
Mahogany clear stain
-  **LIGHTING:** Luminis  
Eclipse Wall Series, Dark Bronze



PHOTO: SANDRA LLOYD / PHOTOGRAPHY INCALAS + PARTNERS

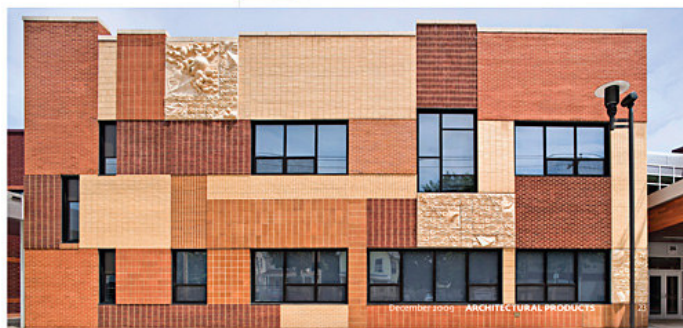
**RELIEF:** A sculpture of Rodrigo de Triana, created by local artist Jose Buscaglia, was funded by a local public arts program. The sculpture brings the building's theme of "creative discovery" together. The wave panels depict currents of air and water moving North, South, East and West, offering students a somewhat mystical perspective of the Earth's natural elements.



**COLUMBUS FAMILY ACADEMY**  
Designed by Svigals + Partners, the Columbus Family Academy in New Haven, Conn., applied these mediums to its building-wide theme of "creative discovery." Highlighting this theme is the publicly commissioned representation of Rodrigo de Triana, a sailor on La Pinta in the famous expedition led by Christopher Columbus in 1492, resting atop the school's main entrance. The imagery created for each of the school's brick facades represents the Earth's north, south, east and west winds during Columbus' voyage to the New World, while his three ships and the winds are expressed within the school's multicolored brick tapestries. A map on the school's lobby floor depicts the northern hemisphere's constellation on October 12th, Columbus Day. To maximize teaching opportunities, Svigals + Partners developed a 12-page educational manual with lessons for including the building's art into the classroom curriculum.

**WINDOWS:** EfcO Series 1300, 2700, 3406, Dark Bronze Anodized Aluminum with Vitrocon VE1+M Glass

-  **BRICK:** Watsontown Brick  
Manhattan Series: Staten Island-Velour
-  **BRICK:** Watsontown Brick  
Sturbridge Smooth-Smooth Sanded
-  **BRICK:** Interstate Brick  
Copperstone-Wire Cut
-  **BRICK:** Interstate Brick  
Golden Buff-Wire Cut



December 2009 ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS



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L.W. BEECHER SCHOOL



- FLOOR:** Wausau Tile  
Terrazzo WM-722, WM-726
- WALL:** Trenwyth Glazed Block, Astra-Glaze-SW  
Sunflower, Warm Spice, Wheatfield
- CEILING:** Acoustic Metal Deck  
United Steel Deck, Type NCAS

**SCULPTURE:** Standing 18-ft. high, Beecher's colorful steel sculpture functionally supports the school's canopy and figuratively acts as an abstract expression of two mythical figures: "Gideon" calling the students to school, and the "Red Piper" who, if the promise of education is not received, calls students away.



L.W. BEECHER SCHOOL

To illustrate the "active learning" theme chosen by the L.W. Beecher School of New Haven, Conn., Svigals + Partners handcrafted a 500-ft.-long frieze made from ¼-in. brushed aluminum, featuring more than 300 figures dancing in the sunlight's reflection off the jagged red cliffs of nearby West Rock Ridge State Park. An 18-ft.-high steel sculpture at the building's entrance supports the school's canopy, while five kinetic mobiles crafted by a local artist suspend from the ceiling of the school's atrium. Characterized by hundreds of fluttering, reflective panes, the mobiles are animated by the building's HVAC system and sunlight entering through the atrium's curtain wall.



**ATRIUM:** Merging the original structure on the left (red brick) with its new addition on the right (multi-colored yellow brick) was an artistic feat for Svigals + Partners. To create the right artistic feel in the adjoining atrium, an internationally-renowned local artist created five kinetic mobiles that hang from the ceiling, showering the atrium's floor and walls with sparkling daylight.

While many of today's school projects may not have room in their budget for "extras," Brotman says incorporating art into a school's architecture doesn't necessarily add cost. "We often use art to replace the elements of the building themselves, so the extra costs don't amount to much," says Brotman. "For example, we create bricks with sculptured faces and sayings on them. The incremental costs are minor if you plan ahead and incorporate art into the building elements you already have to provide."

Art can make a building beautiful, but can it be justified if it fails to serve a practical function within the facility itself? "We think functional can't be separated from the essential human need for inspiration," relays Brotman. "We see art as playing a functional role in and of itself. One of the functional roles it plays is inspiring teachers and students to go beyond what they would normally do."



**FRIEZE:** A hand-crafted aluminum frieze, featuring more than 300 dancing figures, crowns the perimeter of the school. Its brushed aluminum surface creates a reflective effect of movement among the dancers, evoking L.W. Beecher School's theme of "active learning."

- BRICKS:** Cushwa/Redland Brick  
#170 Camden Blend
- BRICK STRIPE:** Sioux City Brick & Tile  
Vintage Brown Vellour
- BRICKS:** Carolina Ceramics  
Terra Costa color
- BRICKS:** Glen-Gery Brick  
56-DD



PHOTOS: ROBERT BENSON, PROVIDED BY SVIGALS + PARTNERS