

Interdisciplinary Science & Technology Building III (Arizona State University) - Jones Studio

The design brief was to create a new state-of-the-art research laboratory on the decommissioned Williams Field Air Force Base for Arizona State University (40 minutes south east of downtown Phoenix). The facility would need to help recruit and retain top faculty and students on a national as well as an international level.

The 3,251 square meter (34,994 square feet) project (located at Unity & 2nd Street), was designed in nine months and constructed in one year. It is an excellent example of modern architecture responding to vernacular challenge—in this case, the extreme summer temperatures of the Sonoran Desert reaching as much as 46 degrees celsius (115 degrees fahrenheit), with a diurnal temperature differential of 17 degrees celsius (30 degrees fahrenheit).

The architecture responds to this blast furnace-like desert heat with a restrained form that provides monastery-esque privacy with 9 m (30 ft) tall, 30 cm (12 in) thick precast concrete panels that were craned into place and attached to the steel post and beam structure. The panels are used for the structure's exterior shell and certain interior partitions. A sea of mosaic perforations are uniformly repeated across every panel articulating a Mayan-like (think Frank Lloyd Wright) expression.

The FLW influence, which concedes more than a mere coincidental intonation, was spawned when the architect visited a group of projects by the American master at Southern Florida College (Lakeland, Florida, 48 km /30 miles east of Tampa). Jones Studio took away from the visit Wright's use of repetitive patterns and colored glass to enhance his environments. The Phoenix-based studio applied the experience to accent their introspective design with occasional colored glazing within certain perforations, thereby creating a sense of the "higher calling" and solemnity of science—the perfect ambiance for the scientific research facility.

In referring to the building's inward form, architect Eddie Jones, AIA, Principal of Jones Studio, notes the planning is modeled after Mexican haciendas where "the typology is extremely introverted with high walls which contain succulent oasis gardens." The architect further points out: "Our studio wanted to create an environment concentrating on the beauty from within, helping to foster privacy and promote greater focus for both scientists and students."