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2025 AIA Fellowship

Candidate Alan Metcalfe
Organization Metcalfe Architecture & Design, LLC
Location Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Chapter AIA Pennsylvania; AIA Philadelphia

Category of Nomination

Object 2 (Practice Management, Technical Advancement) > Practice (Management)

Summary Statement

Alan Metcalfe, committed to creative, intentional invention, founded a unique practice focused on the relationship between design and human experience, blending architecture, exhibit design, and graphic design to bring communities together with socially engaging spaces.

Education

Columbia University, 1988, Master of Architecture
Tufts University, 1978, Bachelor of Arts, Art History, magna cum laude
Phillips Exeter Academy, 1974, High School Diploma, Honors

Licensed in:

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and NCARB

Employment

Metcalfe, Principal and Founding Partner, 2001 to Present
Metcalfe + Tsirantonakis, Partner, 1995 to 2001
Metcalfe Borchard Architects, Partner, 1992 to 1995
Ballinger Company (Now Ballinger), Lead Designer, 1989 to 1992
General Contractor & Cabinetmaker, 1976 to 1988



October 9, 2024

Carl D'Silva, FAIA Jury Chair
Jury of Fellows
American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292

Re: Alan Metcalfe Fellowship Nomination; Object Two: Practice Management

Dear Mr. D'Silva and the Members of the Jury,

I am delighted to sponsor Alan Metcalfe for Fellowship. Alan and I have known each other since 1988, when he worked with my partners and me at Ballinger, an architecture and engineering firm in Philadelphia. I encouraged him to establish his own practice in 1992, and since then, I have closely followed and admired his work. Metcalfe Architecture & Design is best described as an "experience design firm" due to its unique blend of design disciplines. Alan skillfully integrates architecture, exhibit design, and graphic design to serve schools, museums, and hospitals, creating spaces that prioritize people and foster social and informal learning.

Over eighty-five percent of Alan's work is with non-profit organizations, and his designs cultivate warm, welcoming environments that encourage interaction and learning. His exemplary portfolio is characterized by the following:

- 1. Interpretive Master Planning:** Alan applies this innovative technique that he found used at museums and national parks to uncover the latent needs of all institutions, creating spaces that promote social interaction tailored to the requirements of end users and their community.
- 2. Design Focused on Human Emotion and Needs:** He is passionate about connecting with people's feelings, crafting designs that evoke pleasure, joy, learning, and knowledge. Alan's magic is that he has synthesized design approaches and methodologies, and built a practice that directly reaches individuals through their perception and experience – no guides or explanations needed. His work engages people where they are; this is particularly evident in how he reaches children and their families at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the whole campus of the Whiting Forest in Michigan.
- 3. Technical Proficiency for Enhanced Amenities:** With twelve years of experience as a carpenter, Alan melds this practical knowledge with his architectural and experience design skills. This combination allows his team of designer builders to create prototypes and complex structures that exhibit a human touch and a sense of humor.
- 4. Nationally Recognized Built Work:** Alan has designed buildings, experiences, and outdoor spaces that empower interaction with their environment and community. His work, such as UPenn's Morris Arboretum canopy walk, has had a "ripple effect" across the U.S., influencing projects like the Wild Center in northern New York. His designs have been published internationally, and he has been invited to deliver the opening guest lecture for the Drexel University architecture thesis class for the past four years because of his unique perspective on design.

Perhaps the highest compliment to his work comes from a young patient at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, who asked her dad, "When can we come back here?" Alan possesses a remarkable ability to unite stakeholders, is a natural teacher, and an exceptionally creative architect. He is an outstanding candidate for Fellowship.

Sincerely,

 FAIA, FACHA, LEED AP

Ed Jakmauh
FAIA, FACHA, LEED AP | Emeritus Principal, Ballinger

1: SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS



Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens
Midland, MI

Alan Metcalfe, committed to creative, intentional invention, founded a **unique practice** focused on the relationship between design and human experience, blending architecture, exhibit design, and graphic design to **bring communities together with socially engaging spaces**.

DESIGNING A UNIQUE PRACTICE

Alan Metcalfe came to architecture after 14 years as a carpenter, deckhand, musician, waiter, farmhand, and newspaper copyboy. After finding his way to Columbia University for a Master of Architecture, his early design career left him **aching to create buildings and spaces relating to human experience for people and organizations he cared about**.

Alan hit his stride founding Metcalfe in 2001. Partnering with a non-architect who had an established career in children's museums, he learned the **power of narrative and play**. His "aha" moment came in 2006 when he melded exhibit design's narrative and storytelling with architecture to create warm, welcoming spaces for people at UPenn's tree canopy walk. **Understanding the power of combining these fields, he purposefully created a practice of multiple disciplines**, designing schools, museums, parks, and hospital public spaces. Today, Metcalfe is a thriving practice of 26 professionals, with two successor partners; the firm's work focuses on galvanizing communities using the power of narrative, space, and open-ended play. 85% of the firm's clients are non-profit organizations, extending Alan's commitment to the profession into unconventional venues.

In 2022, **Alan received the Wyck-Strickland Award, a lifetime achievement award which "honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the cultural life of Philadelphia** through work that reflects a drive for progress and modernity with a sensitivity to the past."

DESIGNING HUMAN EXPERIENCES

Alan has always been a student of the human experience. It informs his design thinking and has resulted in nationally and internationally

recognized projects that promote interaction, community, accessibility, and connection.

Understanding that **people are attracted to people** and happiest when **connected to the natural world**, Alan seeks clients and opportunities with a shared vision to create spaces that attract humans. His designs connect to function and emotion through a concept he calls "setting the table." Exhibit design serves as the foundation for this concept, drawing visitors into a space to explore, gather, and discover instead of being told. Alan subtly weaves architecture into the concept to create warm, inviting spaces that function well and feel good. The tree canopy walks at Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia and Whiting Forest in Michigan are shining examples of "setting the table" through immersive outdoor experiences that foster community engagement and discovery. Both projects received widespread media coverage for their design excellence and created a "ripple effect" directly influencing the canopy walk at the Wild Center in Tupper, NY. Recognizing the importance of designing experiences for the future, Alan is a LEED AP, and advocates for sustainable design. He is influencing upcoming architects as a regular guest critic at local universities and an annual lecturer on experience design for Drexel University's architectural thesis class. The firm has designed the first Passive House dormitory in the United States and is a signatory of the AIA 2030 Challenge.

INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLANNING

Alan's work commences with a robust inquiry called Interpretive Master Planning (IMP). Utilized since the 1930s by parks and museums, **Alan introduced this innovative approach to his architectural clients to provide a connection between strategic and physical master planning**. IMP answers the "why" of

proposing a new building or space, and defines the spaces of a campus that reflect each institution's culture. This planning process marries well with Alan's inquisitive nature and active listening skills. Alan has successfully implemented IMP for schools and non-profits, resulting in spaces that are driven by and tailored to the needs of users. For the William Way Community Center in Philadelphia, Alan facilitated an inclusive IMP process with an LBGTQIA+ community who felt stressed about their future. The outcome is a welcoming addition/renovation layered with optimism and inclusivity in the context of a safe space.

Alan has lectured on Interpretive Master Planning at numerous school conferences and has published on it in Net Assets, a magazine for independent school CFOs. His lectures on experience design extoll the benefits of this engaging planning process and illustrate the importance of understanding a client's cultural and institutional identity.

DIVERSE SKILL SETS

Alan's perspective as a former carpenter has informed his firm's growth, hiring many "makers" including carpenters, a tile layer, butcher, cabinetmaker, sculptor, and a steel fabricator. His team's technical ability—expressed in mockups, freehand drawing, and hands-on inquiry—complements their work in experiential design. Alan seeks out unusual and often complicated projects where the firm's ethos, "building experiences," and its creative diversity will have maximum positive impact. In the early days of his practice, Alan recognized that **architecture + exhibit design + graphic design = human-centered spaces that tell a story. Consequently, a cross-pollination of these disciplines informs every project**, from a "thrill ride" universal theater in the lobby of Foster and Partners' Comcast Technology Center to a 13,000 SF immersive, family-focused Wiffle ball experience for the Philadelphia Phillies.

2: SIGNIFICANT WORK



PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Metcalfe

Philadelphia, PA
Principal and Founding Partner, 2001 to Present

Metcalfe + Tsirantonakis

Philadelphia, PA
Partner, 1995 to 2001

Metcalfe Borchard Architects

Philadelphia, PA
Partner, 1992 to 1995

Ballinger Company (Now Ballinger)

Philadelphia, PA
Lead Designer, 1989 to 1992

General Contractor & Cabinetmaker

Boston, MA and New York, NY
Carpenter and foreman on mid-sized residential and commercial projects, 1976 to 1988

EDUCATION

Columbia University

New York, NY
Master of Architecture, 1988

Tufts University

Medford, MA
Bachelor of Arts, Art History, magna cum laude, 1978

Phillips Exeter Academy

Exeter, NH
Honors, 1974

REGISTRATION

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and NCARB

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Institute of Architects

APPA - Delaware Valley Chapter

LEED AP

National Business Officers Association

National Council of Architectural Review Board

Society for College and University Planning

JURIES



American Institute of Architects

Philadelphia Emerging Architects Awards
Philadelphia Judge, 2015



American Institute of Architects

Annual Awards
New England Judge, 2012

Before founding Metcalfe in 2001, Alan spent over ten years as a lead designer or partner at three other firms. His early design career left him aching to create buildings and spaces relating to human experience. Influenced by the wide variety of jobs he held before receiving his Master of Architecture, Alan has since shaped his career around creating human-centered spaces that tell a story.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Awbury Arboretum

Philadelphia, PA
Construction Committee & Board Member,
2019 to Present

Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, PA
Physical Facilities Committee, 2016 to 2024

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Philadelphia, PA
Design & Horticulture Committee Member,
2016 to 2020

Springfield Mill Building Restoration Committee

Philadelphia, PA
Committee Chair, 2010-2012

Allens Lane Art Center

Philadelphia, PA
Board Member, 2000 to 2005

West Mt. Airy Neighbors

Philadelphia, PA
Board Member, 2000 to 2005





Passive House Residence Hall

Client: Solebury School (Non-profit)
Location: New Hope, PA
Completion: 2023
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp., IMP

Metcalfe worked closely with the Solebury community in a series of in-depth exercises in the context of **Interpretive Master Planning**—a process of planning born in the National Park System in the 1930's and used in museums that Alan Metcalfe has uniquely applied to his work in schools. This system uses exercises to research and create narratives about the ways that a community might use its campus and building(s). The result is a building that really serves its community and a school that creates something that speaks to their community's needs. The students ended up with many amenities; the addition of "treehouses" at the end of each hallway made them feel like "this school really 'gets' us." Meeting the sustainability goals of the school, the building is Passive House certified, the first dormitory with these qualifications in the U.S.



PhillyCAM Studio Headquarters

Client: PhillyCAM (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2013
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp.

PhillyCAM hired Metcalfe to design its permanent, 9,400 SF home in a repurposed mid-century modern building in Philadelphia's historic district. The new facility features television studios, media production training rooms, social spaces, and offices. Metcalfe used **human experience** design to make PhillyCAM's presence known. A bank of windows at the sidewalk and sequentially firing lights on its facade (derived from its logo) creates a visual connection at the street while greeting visitors from afar. The design—a result of Metcalfe's combined graphic design and architecture skill sets—brings these elements together to create a narrative that reflects PhillyCAM's brand.

"Fabulous, even better real than imagined."

Gretjen Clausing, Executive Director, PhillyCAM



Awbury Campus Master Plan and New Building

Client: Wissahickon Charter School (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2015
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Unique Prac.

Metcalfe worked with Wissahickon Charter School to master plan and design an affordable new 48,000 SF, \$12 million school building on a brownfield site adjacent to the Awbury Arboretum. The school's mission focuses on the environment, service learning, and family involvement. Even with its modest budget, Metcalfe was able to use their skills in **human experience** design to create a warm and welcoming environment. Starting from the approach to the building and the view to the sidewalk, Alan Metcalfe made sure that the school maintained the strong character that he found on their first campus. Clear wayfinding tells visitors "we know who we are" and "welcome!" Upon entry, the lobby reinforces the school's mission of "taking care of the earth that takes care of us" by focusing the visitor's first view: two stories of glass, revealing

the gorgeous trees of the neighboring Awbury Arboretum. Visitors and students are greeted by the faces of the head of school and administrators. The lobby serves both as the school's cultural nexus and as its auditorium; students sit and stand in the lobby and up the steps so that they can all meet and feel the power of their community.

2013 PA Brownfields Conference Extreme Makeover Award Winner

"Metcalfe is a national treasure!"

Kristina P. Littell, CEO, Wissahickon Charter School



“Out on a Limb” Tree Canopy Walk

Client: Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2009
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp., Div. Skills

“We need trees and the urban forest needs us.” This is the central message of Out on a Limb, a 450-foot-long walkway rising up to 50 feet into the treetops. Alan Metcalfe designed this groundbreaking project that melds his practice’s **diverse skill sets** of architecture, exhibit and graphic design, and prototype fabrication into **experience design**. It balances perceived risk, with safety, natural materials and living trees to create playful learning and social interactions to educate visitors about the urban forest.

“[Out on a Limb]...surpasses [our] educational and experiential aspirations...and does so in an original, creative, engaging and totally thrilling manner.”

David Hollenberg, University Architect, University of Pennsylvania



AFS Outside

Client: Abington Friends School (Non-profit)
Location: Jenkintown, PA
Completion: 2012-2016
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp., IMP, Div. Skills

Metcalfe was hired to design two phases of open-ended, physical play areas for the early childhood through middle school students. The environment was designed to reflect the Reggio-informed learning principles that form the core of the school’s philosophy: child-directed, providing contact with nature, and welcoming for the whole family. This design utilized the firm’s skills with **Interpretive Master Planning**, and **experience design** to create and realize narratives about home and the children’s visions for a fantasy playground.

2012 AFS’s nature playground was the first Nature Explore Classroom in Pennsylvania to be certified by the Arbor Day Foundation.



Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens Master Plan and Canopy Walk

Client: Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation (Non-profit)
Location: Midland, MI
Completion: 2018
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp., Div. Skills

Alan Metcalfe brought his sensibility to this project for Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation. Herbert Dow engaged in “open-ended play” while working in his beloved apple orchards. Similarly, foundation president Mike Whiting found spending time as a child in the campus’s woods life changing. He wanted to bring this same world to the public, so Metcalfe imagined a family play forest that centered on **human experience** where visitors encounter a series of “right-brained” experiences. “Perceived risk” plays a large part in the design, creating moments of fear, curiosity and joy in the canopy walk, water play, netting, and glass floors high up in the trees. These “tricks” create communal conversational moments. Metcalfe’s **diverse skill sets** as exhibit designers and architects made their work so much meatier than that of an average architecture

firm. Featuring a progression of open fields into dark forests, visitors are not constrained to staying on trails: the more they wander, the more they experience nature and opportunities for introspection. Interconnected spaces and active zones include two bridges, an amphitheater, orchards, an expansive canopy walk, a nature play area, a visitor center, an art studio, and a public program building.

“Metcalfe absorbed our vision and created a solution that took our institution to the next level... Since opening day, our visitor count has increased dramatically, and we have brought joy to the lives of the families who visit the Forest; an exceptional return on our investment.”

Macauley (Mike) Whiting, President, The Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation



Settlement Music School Renovation

Client: Settlement Music School (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2017
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp., IMP

Metcalfe worked closely with the school's administration to update many components of the existing 19th-century building and its 1970s addition including renovation of interior spaces, mechanical systems, exterior graphic identity, sustainable parking lot, and rain gardens. Metcalfe used their understanding of humor in the context of **Interpretive Master Planning** and **human experience** to design a canopy in the form of an opened piano lid and piano keys. The new entrance creates a strong sense of identity for the school and tells students and their families a story, making them feel welcome as they enter a world of music.

"Metcalfe's work is stunning...we are thrilled with the work they did for us."

Helen Eaton, CEO, Settlement Music School



PreK-8 Building and Master Plan

Client: Bryn Athyn Church School (Non-profit)
Location: Bryn Athyn, PA
Completion: 2025 (projected)
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp.

The firm is working with the School to master plan their site and design a new 120,000 SF "one-hundred-year building" to fit into their timeless campus. Using the firm's background with **designing for human experience**, the design team guided the school and its close-knit community through many programming exercises to reach consensus on how to design the most important components for their new campus. While the project was initially designed as an extensive renovation of the school's classic mid-century modern buildings, Metcalfe's master plan identified the need for a new and contextually sympathetic building to create a modern campus to fit their current and future needs. The plan includes a new front door/entry sequence, public facing programs, nature play and specialized classrooms.

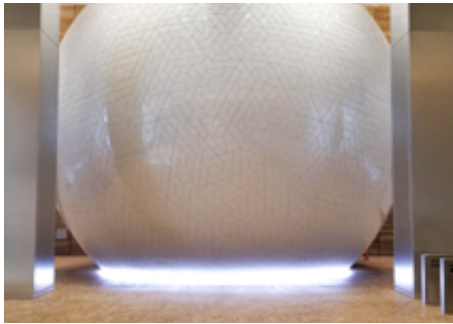


Hargroves House and Exterior Space

Client: Greene Street Friends School
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2009
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp.

Metcalfe repurposed and restored this run down, historically significant early 19th-century house, preserving its historical fabric and repurposing it as an elegant new face of the school. It now provides a home for GSFS' admissions and head of school. Metcalfe transformed a "found space," an unattractive driveway, into a compelling campus—connecting space with a clear identity of its own. Alan Metcalfe's **unique practice** combined exhibit and architectural design to create a labyrinth. Knowing the ways of **human experience**, they understood that giving the space a strong sense of identity would "set the table" for its use. Campus visitors and students find themselves enticed to walk the labyrinth, while the school uses this space for formal and informal events.

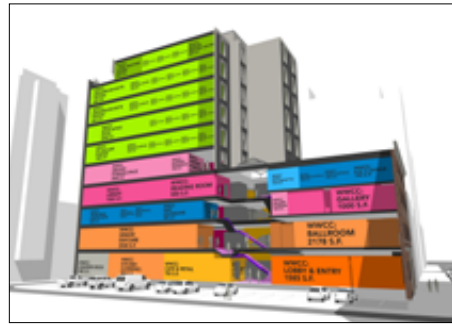
2009 Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, Grand Jury Award
 Pennsylvania Society of Registered Architects, Design Award of Honor



Comcast Technology Center, The Universal Sphere™

Client: Show Canada
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2018
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Unique Prac., Div. Skills

The Universal Sphere™ in the Comcast Technology Center's lobby is a unique, immersive, multimedia visitor experience. The interior of the 40-foot diameter, soundproof sphere is a combination of a planetarium and an IMAX screen, with the addition of a rotating lift to raise the seating platform into the optimum viewing position. Utilizing the **diverse skill sets** of their **unique practice concept**, Alan Metcalfe led the team responsible for permitting the project as an amusement ride, coordinating the cooling and ventilation requirements, fire suppression strategy, interior finishes, and accessibility requirements.



Community Center Renovation and Addition

Client: William Way LGBT Community Center (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2026 (projected)
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp., IMP

Located in the heart of Philadelphia's "Gayborhood," the William Way LGBT Community Center provides vital services to the region's LGBTQIA+ community. Metcalfe is working with the Center to reimagine its home with a 10-story addition and extensive renovation to their historic 1940s building. Metcalfe's design process utilized **Interpretive Master Planning** to drive discussions about the meaning of "queer space," striking a balance between transparency and privacy, to design **experiences** that reinforce a sense of safety and welcome. Construction on this \$30 million project is planned to begin in 2024, and to be complete late 2026.



"Eco-Yurt" Village

Client: Camp Havaya
Location: South Sterling, PA
Completion: 2015
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp., IMP

Metcalfe designed a summer camp expansion for 90 residents in a sustainably designed campus in the Pocono Mountains. The design provides social and performance spaces where 10th and 11th grade campers can enjoy their summer, while experiencing and learning about the benefits of **sustainable building**. Metcalfe designed the campus utilizing their knowledge of **human experience** and **Interpretive Master Planning** (learned in the context of their unique practice that combines architecture and exhibit design). They used the power of social interaction to move people through the camp, from bathhouses with outdoor meeting areas and "leg shaving stations" for the girls (an idea gleaned from Alan's IMP exercises) to a huge, communal firepit inscribed with Hebrew phrases.

The camp's features also include eco-yurts; rain gardens; recycled materials doors, windows and equipment; decking made of recycled plastic; and energy-efficient lighting — all organized within a clearing in the woods.

2017 SARA National Design Award of Excellence

"Alan and his team are innovative, creative, detail-oriented, and a pleasure to work with. Their ethos, process, and design were right in line with our values and dreams. They just 'got it.'"

Rabbi Isaac Saposnik, Executive Director, Camp Havaya / Eco-Village



Revolution Place Discovery Center

Client: Museum of the American Revolution (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completed: 2018
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp.

Designed to engage the museum's youngest visitors and their families, this exhibit provides an interactive experience of Philadelphia in the 1770s by immersing visitors in the experience of a military encampment, a tavern, a home, and a meeting house. These spaces are woven together using storytelling to give visitors a better understanding of the conditions and issues that led to the American Revolution. By creating a warm and welcoming space, Alan and the team "set the table" for even its youngest visitors to feel compelled to stand at the meeting house lectern and give a pretend presentation reminiscent of 18th-century Philadelphia.

2020 S.K. Stevens Award
2018 PA Museums Institutional Achievement Award



Griffin Discovery Room

Client: Monticello (Non-profit)
Location: Charlottesville, VA
Completion: 2009
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp., Div. Skills

The Griffin Discovery Room engages families in a process of play and discovery as they explore the rich and complex history of Monticello. It features hands-on interactives throughout the space, including interpretations of enslaved peoples' dwellings, murals, objects and activities which bring their stories to life, and replicas of Jefferson's possessions, ranging from his alcove bed to his polygraph machine. Metcalfe's **experience design practice** drove them to create replicas of historical artifacts that its young visitors can touch. This exhibit is so much more accessible than the average "don't touch" museum. Metcalfe's **diverse practice skill set** made the detailing of the structures historically accurate as well as engaging.

2011 Named #3 of 15 Spots Every Kid Should See Before Turning 15 by MSNBC



Goat Hollow Restaurant Design

Client: Goat Hollow
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2013
Role: Founding Partner, Designer
Themes: Human Exp.

Alan's design thinking promotes interaction, community, accessibility, and connection at any scale, from large-scale buildings to intimate dining rooms. Using this philosophy, his firm created a new urban bistro out of this cultural landmark in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia that connects function and emotion. A vibrant red canopy topped by an aluminum goat silhouette indicates the entrance to this restaurant—people feel most comfortable when they know they "have arrived" at a well-marked space that indicates the institution has a strong identity, knows who they are, and will take care of its visitors. A decorative fence in the entry also gives visitors a peek into the outdoor seating, showing them that the restaurant is filled with people, as people are naturally attracted to other people and find lively spaces more compelling and safe. A large hearth of recycled brick

greet visitors with a cozy fire, the universal signal of safety and welcome. The design also incorporates objects from a local salvage company and makes extensive use of recycled brick, custom wallpaper images of rustic local buildings and vegetation, chandeliers of root balls and recycled bottles, and vintage seating, while updating the kitchen and overall infrastructure.



The Yard at Citizens Bank Park

Client: Philadelphia Phillies
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completed: 2018
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp., Div. Skills

Turning spectators into active participants, The Yard is a 13,000 SF immersive experience born of Metcalfe's **experience design** chops that offers fans a chance to get into the game. The team's **diverse skill set** involved them in every aspect of the project—from prototyping the hot dog launcher to fitting the outfield wall with MLB-quality protective pads—delivering a project that is an informed combination of architecture and exhibit design. The Yard was carefully planned to be a seamless extension of the main venue. It uses the same building materials, finishes, and architectural features, with the Wiffle ball diamond oriented to share the same skyline vista as the big-league field.



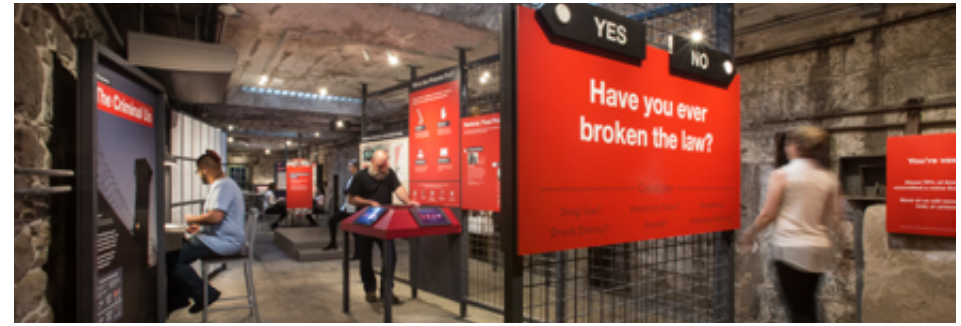
Making Room: Housing for a Changing America Exhibit Design

Client: National Building Museum (Non-profit)
Location: Washington, D.C.
Completed: 2017
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp.

Metcalfe designed this exhibit to demonstrate how the housing market can better reflect today's demands for more flexible and responsive living spaces. Metcalfe's **diverse practice of architects and exhibit design** made the perfect team for designing an exhibit covering architecture and land use. The exhibit discusses how post-World War II suburbanization of America was driven by the housing needs of nuclear families, the nation's leading demographic. Alan's team created an immersive, engaging experience using compelling graphics, case studies, media and interactive elements to illustrate the complex housing issues confronting Americans today.

"The design is simply fantastic. You have set the bar very high for all future exhibitions."

Cathy Crane Frankel, VP for Exhibitions & Collections, NBM



Prisons Today: Questions in the Age of Mass Incarceration Exhibit Design

Client: Eastern State Penitentiary (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2016
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp., Div. Skills

Metcalfe partnered with Eastern State Penitentiary to design a groundbreaking new exhibit that tells the stories of incarcerated Americans and examines the impact of prisons on communities of poor people of color. Metcalfe's **diverse skill sets and unique practice of architects and exhibit designers** made it possible for them to design this exhibit. Their abilities as architects made this project work well in the context of this unheated rustic and delicate historical monument. Their knowledge of play and human behavior pushed them to create an interactive and **experiential** exhibit that skillfully **plays on guilt and morality** to engage visitors with the question "have you ever committed a crime?"

The dialogue of Prisons Today continues to encourage reflection and conversation and suggests steps

that visitors can take to help shape the evolution of the American criminal justice system.

2017 AAM Excellence in Exhibition Award

"The design team at Metcalfe was amazing... At the beginning, they were spinning out ideas, literally sketching on sheet after sheet of graph paper with big, bold ideas, inspiring us to think of new ways the ideas could be expressed in interactive experiences and in exhibit elements... never getting hung up on getting their favorite ideas into the final exhibit but trusting that we knew the audience and outcomes best."

Sean Kelley, Senior Vice President, Director of Interpretation, Eastern State Penitentiary



Buerger Center Interactives

Client: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completed: 2015
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Unique Prac., Human Exp.

A result of the **unique practice** Alan has cultivated and his team's commitment to **designing for human experience**, Metcalfe created innovative and playful interactive experiences, colorful environmental graphics, and dynamic wayfinding elements as part of a multi-phased project for a 12 story, 700,000 SF ambulatory care tower in Philadelphia. Scattered throughout the waiting areas and lobbies, the interactives encourage patients, their families, and hospital visitors to touch, view, and play individually or with a group. Metcalfe's designs are sensitive to the diversity of CHOP's patients and visitors, conform to rigorous cleaning, maintenance, and infection prevention standards, and most importantly provide a welcome distraction and unexpected moments of fun in an otherwise stressful environment.



UPMC Harrisburg

Client: Stantec
Location: Harrisburg, PA
Completed: 2021
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp.

Metcalfe worked closely with the client team to provide patient experience consulting and design services for a new pediatric unit at the hospital. Metcalfe's **diverse skill sets** and **experience design** frame of reference led them to design environmental graphics and moments of positive distraction to create a welcoming atmosphere for patients and families. Patients discover a pair of oversized kaleidoscopes, play with an interactive "creature builder" or paint on a motion sensitive LED wall.

2021 Interior Design's Best of Year, Healthcare, Finalist
 Healthcare Design Magazine, Remodel/Renovation Competition, Silver Award



The Academy at 200: The Nature of Discovery Exhibit Design

Client: Academy of Natural Sciences (Non-profit)
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Completion: 2021
Role: Founding Partner
Themes: Human Exp., Div. Skills

This family-friendly exhibition celebrates the Academy's Bicentennial and showcases the ground-breaking historic and contemporary science they conduct. Metcalfe utilized its **experience design** and **diverse skill set** to create this exhibit that engages visitors by showing them the process used at the museum, taking them, for example, underwater to a reef to capture fish specimens, through the process of evaluating and preserving the artifact, all the way to display. In the center of the exhibit hall are a number of touchable treasures that **encourage conversation** and **informal learning** including a 400-pound meteorite, brain coral, and whale jaw. An 80-footlong wall of specimens spans the enormous array of life on the planet, from a complete Irish Elk fossil skeleton to breathtaking microscopic photographs of diatoms.

Five historical displays feature famous Academy luminaries from the past, and a dynamic wall of exhibits represents the 13 Academy departments.

"It was a pleasure working with a design firm that was receptive to our ideas and offered their professional insight and creativity to produce an exhibit that has exceeded our expectations."

Jacqueline Genovesi, Senior Director of Education, Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

**STATE & REGIONAL**

2019 AIA Tri-State Bronze Award for Architectural Excellence

2010 AIA Pennsylvania Award for Architectural Excellence, Citation of Merit

PHILADELPHIA

2010 AIA Philadelphia Gold Medal Award for Design Excellence

INDIVIDUAL2022 **Wyck-Strickland Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Cultural Life of Philadelphia**

2015 HGTV Fresh Faces of Design

NATIONAL

2021 Healthcare Design Magazine, Remodel/Renovation Competition, Silver Award

Interior Design's Best of Year, Healthcare, Finalist

2020 Architizer A+Awards, Landscape & Planning, Public Parks, Finalist

IIDA Healthcare Design Award, Best of Pediatric Hospital Design

Interior Design's Best of Year, Healthcare, Finalist

2019 American Association for State and Local History Award of Excellence

Society of American Registered Architects (SARA) National Design Award of Merit2017 **American Alliance of Museums, Excellence in Exhibition Design Award****SARA National Design Award of Excellence**2010 **AAM, Excellence in Exhibition Design Award**

American Galvanizers Association Hot-Dip Galvanizing Excellence Award

2008 Industrial Perforators Association Design Contest, Honorable Mention

2007 AAM MUSE Awards, Honorable Mention

American School & University Educational Interiors Showcase Competition Featured Project

Metal Architecture Design Awards, Renovations

STATE & REGIONAL

2021 IIDA Pennsylvania, New Jersey & Delaware Chapter Best of Healthcare (under 50,000 SF) Design Award

LUXLife Magazine, Most Innovative Architecture & Design Practice, Pennsylvania

2020 Build Magazine Design & Build Awards, Leaders in Architecture & Design, Pennsylvania

IIDA Pennsylvania, New Jersey & Delaware Chapter Best of Healthcare (under 50,000 SF) Design Award

S.K. Stevens Award (PA Museums)

2019 **PA Museum's Institutional Achievement Award**2018 **SARA Pennsylvania Design Award of Excellence**2015 **Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Building Museums Conference "Buidly" Award**

2012 SARA Pennsylvania Design Award of Merit

2009 Associated Builders and Contractors, Southeast PA Merit Construction Award of Excellence for Best Unique Construction Project

SARA Pennsylvania Design Award of Honor

2008 Mid-Atlantic Construction Magazine Best of 2008 Small Projects Winner

PHILADELPHIA

2016 City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and the Community Design Collaborative Storefront Challenge — Best Overall Design

2014 City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and the Community Design Collaborative Storefront Challenge — Best Overall Design

2010 Best of Philly® Awards

2009 **Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Grand Jury Winner**

2007 Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Award of Recognition

INTERNATIONAL2020 **American Architecture Award (European Center & Chicago Athenaeum)**

2012 International Galvanizing Awards, Paris, France — Highly Commended project (only North American project to receive this distinction)

2010 International Making Cities Livable Child-Friendly Communities Design Awards, Green Places Award



AUTHORED BY NOMINEE

Net Assets

“Building on Culture.” Article on Interpretive Master Planning.
May/June 2022

[Link](#)

Parks & Rec Business Magazine

“Whiting Forest Provides a Memorable Experience that Fosters Inter-Generational Interaction.”
May 2020

PROFILES & INTERVIEWS

Building Design + Construction

“Don’t sell services when clients want outcomes: Evaluating + investing resources to navigate past the COVID-19 pandemic.” Interview with Alan Metcalfe.
July 2021

[Link](#)

CLAD Magazine

“Landscape Design: Back to Nature.” Interview with Alan Metcalfe.
December 2019

[Link](#)

Keystone Edge

Interview with Alan Metcalfe.
December 2012

Philadelphia Business Journal

“Share the credit, take the blame.” Profile of Alan Metcalfe.
July 10, 2009

PROJECTS



Context Magazine

Feature on Solebury School.
Fall 2024

[Link](#)

Healthcare Design

“Satellite Success.” Feature on Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Middleman Family Pavilion.
August 2023

Healthcare Design

“CHOP’s New Hospital Creates Full Spectrum of Care In King of Prussia, Pa.”
July 26, 2023

[Link](#)

Global Design News

“Metcalfe creates the new Dow Gardens with the philosophy of a place that brings people together outdoors with purposeful interaction with nature.”
July 9, 2021

[Link](#)

Great Lakes Bay

“The Magic of the Forest.” Feature on Whiting Forest.
April 2018

Design Museum

Feature on Morris Arboretum “Out on a Limb.”
Fall 2018



moool (China)

Feature on Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens.
October 12, 2018

Net Assets

“Building Enrollment.” Feature on Springside Chestnut Hill Academy.
June 30, 2018

Healthcare Design

“2017 Design Showcase Award Winners.” Feature on CHOP’s Buerger Center for Advanced Pediatric Care.
August 2017



*AIA Publications



*International Publications





Healthcare Design

"Safe Haven: A new inpatient unit at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia offers a specialized environment for patients with both medical and behavioral health needs."
August 2017

Wall Street Journal

"Paying Homage to the Building of America at the National Museum of Industrial History."
August 23, 2016
[Link](#)

Associated Press

Feature on the National Museum of Industrial History.
August 4, 2016
[Link](#)

AIA Context Magazine (AIA Philadelphia)

"Children's Hospital of Philadelphia 'Wait, Play, Learn.'"
Summer 2016
[Link](#)

Huffington Post

"New Philly Digs for InterAct Theatre"
July 2016
[Link](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer

"Eastern State tackles true terror: Mass incarceration."
May 4, 2016
[Link](#)

HGTV.com

"A Vibrant Kitchen Makeover." Feature on Cohen House.
2015
[Link](#)

Mother Nature Network

"A tree (and so much more) grows in Brooklyn."
July 30, 2015

New York Times

"Brooklyn Botanic's New Discovery Garden, Not Just for Kids."
June 11, 2015
[Link](#)

Architectural Digest

"Brooklyn Botanic Garden Unveils a New Children's Discovery Garden."
May 31, 2015
[Link](#)

HGTV's You Live in What?

Nationally broadcast TV episode feature on the Curran House.
February 9, 2015
[Link](#)

BBC.com

"Inside decaying US prison, former inmates are guides."
May 11, 2016

Connecticut Magazine

"Home at Last." Feature on the Spence House.
2013

Philadelphia Style

"Branching Out: A Conshohocken Home Embraces Its Tree-Filled Surroundings with Fluid Spaces and Expansive Views."
Fall 2013

College Planning and Management

Feature on Widener University dining expansion.
June 2013

Huffington Post

"House Tour: Amy and Michael Cohen's Philadelphia Colonial Gets a Surprising New Interior from Metcalfe Architecture and Design."
August 6, 2012
[Link](#)



6ABC's FYI Philly

Regionally broadcast TV segment on the Cohen House.
July 14, 2012



Details (South Korea)

"Tree Adventure." Feature on Morris Arboretum
"Out on a Limb."
May 2011



Tasarim (Turkey)

"Moon gates of the transition to nature." Feature on Morris Arboretum "Out on a Limb."
February 2011



Casabella (Italy)

Feature on Morris Arboretum "Out on a Limb."
November 2010

Interior Design

"Turning Over a New Leaf." Feature on Morris Arboretum
"Out on a Limb."
June 2010

Metal Architecture

"Urban forest playground." Feature on Morris Arboretum
"Out on a Limb."
May 2010
[Link](#)

Travel + Leisure

"Walk Among the Treetops at Philly's Morris Arboretum."
May 4, 2010

Town and Country

"Out on the Town." Short feature on Morris Arboretum "Out on a Limb."
April 2010



Philadelphia Inquirer

"Getting a bird's-eye view of the trees". Review of Morris Arboretum "Out on a Limb" by architecture critic Inga Saffron.
August 29, 2009
[Link](#)

NBC10 News

Regionally broadcast TV segment on Morris Arboretum "Out on a Limb."
June 2009

Philadelphia Magazine

"Thinking Small: Three classic Philly dwellings—a trinity, a carriage house and a one-bedroom apartment—prove little is big again." Feature on Curran House.
October 2007



Context Magazine (AIA Philadelphia)

"Outdoor Inspiration." Feature on Abington Art Center Sculpture Orientation Exhibit.
Spring 2007

Metal Architecture

"Showing The Way." Feature on Abington Art Center Sculpture Orientation Exhibit.
February 2007

"[Out on a Limb] makes you see the world in a new way... [Metcalfe applies] time-honored architectural tricks to enhance nature's drama—opening up a wide vista here, compressing the focus over there, while frequently testing our fear of heights. The result is a space that exerts an irresistible allure, to young and old alike."

Inga Saffron, architecture critic, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Alan has lectured on Interpretive Master Planning at numerous school conferences. As a guest design critic at universities in New York and Pennsylvania, his experience with IMP provides an unconventional and unique perspective on student work. His lectures on experience design extoll the benefits of this engaging planning process and illustrate the importance of understanding a client's cultural and institutional identity.

Tennessee Association of Independent School Business Office and HR Conference “Discover How Interpretive Master Planning Can Transform Your School”
Nashville, TN, April 2024

Florida Council of Independent Schools Convention
“Planning with Heart: How Interpretive Master Planning Can Transform a School Campus”
Miami, FL, November 2023

Mid-South Independent School Business Officers (MISBO) Conference
“10 High-Impact Growth Opportunities for Excellent Schools” Workshop
Clearwater Beach, FL, October 2023

Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS) Annual Conference
“10 Major Branding Opportunities that Schools Miss”
Lancaster, PA, October 2023

PCPCS Annual Conference
“Creating Healing Spaces for Students with Trauma-Informed Design”
Lancaster, PA, October 2023

Drexel University, Architecture Thesis Class
“Metcalfe: Who We Are and How We Think”
Philadelphia, PA, 2023 & May 2022

Philadelphia Area Independent School Business Officers Association (PAISBOA) Annual Conference
“Interpretive Master Planning: Planning with a Heart” Roundtable
Springfield, PA, May 2023

PCPCS CEO Summit
“Interpretive Master Planning: How Interpretive Master Planning Can Transform a School Campus”
Exton, PA, April 2023

Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States Annual Conference
“Interpretive Master Planning: Designing a School with a Heart”
Alexandria, VA, February 2023

MISBO Annual Conference
“Planning with Heart: An integrated approach to creating a beautiful school”
Savannah, GA, October 2022

PAISBOA Conference
“Introduction to Interpretive Master Planning — Designing a School with a Heart”
2022

National Business Officers Association Conference
“Interpretive Planning”
2021

PCPCS Conference
“Facilities & Finances Bootcamp”
2020

Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society Conference & Expo
“(Risky) Play is Good”
State College, PA, April 2019

Matrix:Midland Festival
“Whiting Forest’s Tree Canopy Walk”
Midland, MI, 2019




TEDx Talk, Free Library of Philadelphia, 2014

Drexel University Guest Lecture
“Exhibit Design & Public Spaces”
Philadelphia, PA, 2015, 2014, 2013

TEDx Talk, Free Library of Philadelphia
“The Architecture of Instinct”
Philadelphia, PA, September, 2014
[Link](#)

National Association of Independent Schools
“From Treetop to Robot: Frontiers in Student Directed Learning”
Orlando, FL, 2014

 **American Institute of Architects National Convention**
“Practicing Small Successfully”
Philadelphia, PA, 2000

3: EXHIBITS





3.1
Designing a Unique
Practice



3.2
Interpretive Master
Planning



3.3
Morris Arboretum
of the University
of Pennsylvania



3.4
Abington Friends
School



3.5
Whiting Forest
of Dow Gardens



3.6
Camp Havaya



3.7
PhillyCAM



3.8
Solebury School



3.9
The Universal Sphere

3.1: Designing a Unique Practice

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD & DESIGN FIRM

Metcalfe

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founder, Designer

CHALLENGE

In 2001, Alan founded Metcalfe as an architecture firm. As the firm evolved and broadened their horizons, Alan faced the challenge of **establishing a practice that extended beyond traditional architecture**, one that could address a full range of human experience by bringing communities together around socially engaging spaces and narratives.

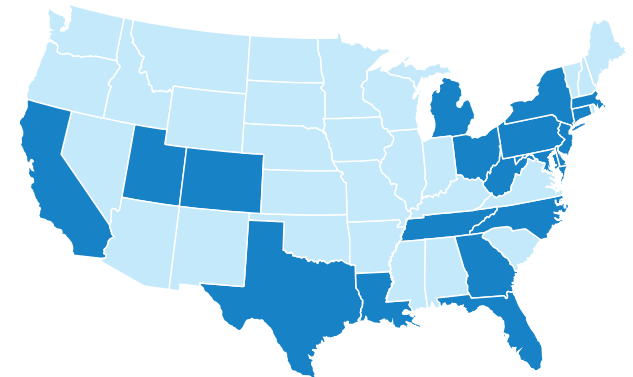
ROLE

Alan's unique perspective of the field was shaped by a wide range of experiences prior to his entry into the world of architecture. Interested in designing buildings and spaces related to the human experience, Alan recognized that people—including architects—are strongest when they can socialize and collaborate. He saw an opportunity to **bolster the architecture profession by drawing from the strengths of different disciplines**.

Driven by his passion for working with mission-focused organizations, Alan founded Metcalfe with a focus on designing for human experience. Over the past two decades, he has pushed his team to design projects that make the world better by breaking down isolation and social distance, leading Metcalfe to create projects predicated on social spaces, informal learning, play, and our collective yearning for the natural world. Metcalfe works with schools, museums, hospitals, and non-profits where their work will have the greatest impact.



Metcalfe Leadership Team, 2022 (Top)
Project Prototyping in the Office (Bottom)



Locations of U.S. Projects

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO EXPERIENCE DESIGN

While Metcalfe was founded as an architecture firm, Alan's strategic inclusion of exhibit design, graphic design, and healthcare design within the practice aims to break down the barriers that separate these traditionally distinct fields. One of Alan's initial strategic decisions was to partner with Aaron Goldblatt, a non-architect with a wealth of experience in exhibit design. Additionally, he brought in an expert in healthcare graphic design and wayfinding, to spearhead the firm's efforts in the healthcare sector. For Alan, the equation is simple: **Architecture + exhibit design + graphic design = human-centered spaces that tell a story.**

Alan's broad perspective of design has profoundly influenced the types of collaborations Metcalfe engages in, the projects they undertake, and the overall outlook of the firm. He built the firm from the invaluable perspective that exhibit design enhances architecture through its emphasis on storytelling, active listening, and creative execution. In return, Alan envisioned architecture's contribution to exhibit design to be its focus on the visitor's experience and functionality.

As a firm composed of many "makers", including carpenters, a tile layer, butcher, cabinetmaker, sculptor, and a steel fabricator, Metcalfe's architects are adept at bringing concepts to life through mockups and testing, employing both digital and physical models. Their architectural mindset regards visitors as complete individuals, and considers how they interact with and utilize spaces. Elements such as guilt, curiosity, and perceived risk (integral components of informal learning and play) place the visitor at the center of every design. Metcalfe's experience working with museums, proficiency in technical architectural environments, and holistic approach to visitor experience are also applicable to healthcare design. The diverse skill sets of Metcalfe's team enables them to create environments that foster "positive distraction," and include elements that resonate with our shared humanity.

OUTCOME

Over two decades Metcalfe's portfolio has grown to encompass both architecture and exhibit design, solidifying the practice as an experience design firm. Today, Metcalfe consists of a team of 26 professionals who primarily work with non-profits, schools, hospitals, cultural organizations, parks, and museums. Metcalfe's client base is comprised primarily of:

- Education: 57%
- Museums & Cultural Institutions: 13%
- Healthcare Patient Experience: 10%
- Libraries & Municipal: 4%
- Other (residential, retail, etc): 16%

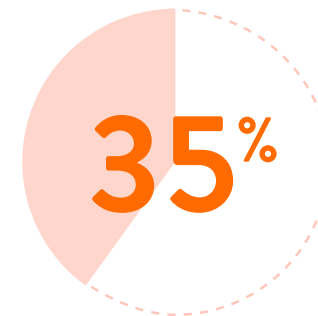
Alan's approach is deeply rooted in emotion, and its success lies in its ability to communicate with our subconscious. Metcalfe's design work is most successful when it subtly sets the stage for human interaction, whispering to us, "this is a safe and welcoming space—come, sit here, let's talk."

Under Alan's leadership, Metcalfe has expanded its focus on the human experience by taking on projects aimed at improving the world, including commitment to the **AIA 2030 Challenge**, and the creation of the first Passive House certified dormitory in the U.S.

This commitment to human experience has also engendered a culture of deep collaboration among staff, one that encourages growth and creativity.

Since 2019, the practice has more than doubled its revenue, growing the team by 100% from 13 to 26 employees. Metcalfe's culture is one that encourages long-term growth; more than 1/3 of employees have been with Metcalfe for 8 years or longer.

***NEW STAFF
MEMBERS
DOUBLED**



**OF EMPLOYEES
HAVE BEEN WITH
METCALFE
8 YEARS
OR LONGER**

***INCREASE IN
REVENUE BY**



***SINCE 2019**

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: founding and leadership of the firm.

Aaron Goldblatt, Partner Emeritus, Metcalfe

3.2: Interpretive Master Planning

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD & DESIGN FIRM

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

Ongoing

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner

CHALLENGE

Metcalfe's extensive experience in physical master planning for schools has consistently led Alan to ask questions about the intent behind institutional choices. For example:

- How can they be certain that a new gym is more necessary than an art studio?
- Will a new gym align with the unique culture of the school or is it based upon the whims of one donor?
- Are there specific annual events for which the gym will be indispensable?
- Will it host and reflect the significant cultural moments that the community holds dear?

Recognizing a need for answers to these questions, Alan sought to **bridge the gap between the strategic master plan's vision and the practical execution of the physical master plan.**



Abington Friends School



PUBLICATIONS

Net Assets magazine
"Building on Culture" by Alan Metcalfe
May/June 2022

ROLE

Metcalfe's work with parks and museums led Alan to incorporate Interpretive Master Planning, invented in the 1930's, into his architectural design process. His inquisitive nature and active listening skills pair inherently well with the IMP approach. He has led and informed IMP exercises at schools such as St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School, Wheeler School, and Solebury School and cultural institutions such as Camp Havaya and Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens.

OUTCOME

IMP begins with in-depth interviews and interactions involving various stakeholders, from end-users to staff, funders, and neighboring communities. Using IMP as part of the design approach for schools and other non-profits is relatively unique in the field of architecture. This process is integral to Metcalfe's methodology, and serves as a bridge between strategic planning and physical master planning. The process involves extracting narratives and identifying pivotal moments in an institution's culture to answer the "why" behind proposing new buildings or spaces.

The firm begins by engaging with the community to gain a comprehensive understanding of their cultural and institutional identity, including diversity and pedagogical strengths. They explore the locations where key events unfold and assess whether existing spaces suffice or new ones are necessary. The result is a design that demonstrates a deep understanding of the school's mission, culture and history, one that resonates with the current needs of the community.

Alan has lectured on the subject of IMP ten times at school conferences, including the National Business Officers Association, the Mid-South Independent School Business Officers, PA Independent School Business Officers Association, and Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States annual conferences, and has published on it in *Net Assets*, a national magazine for independent school CFOs.

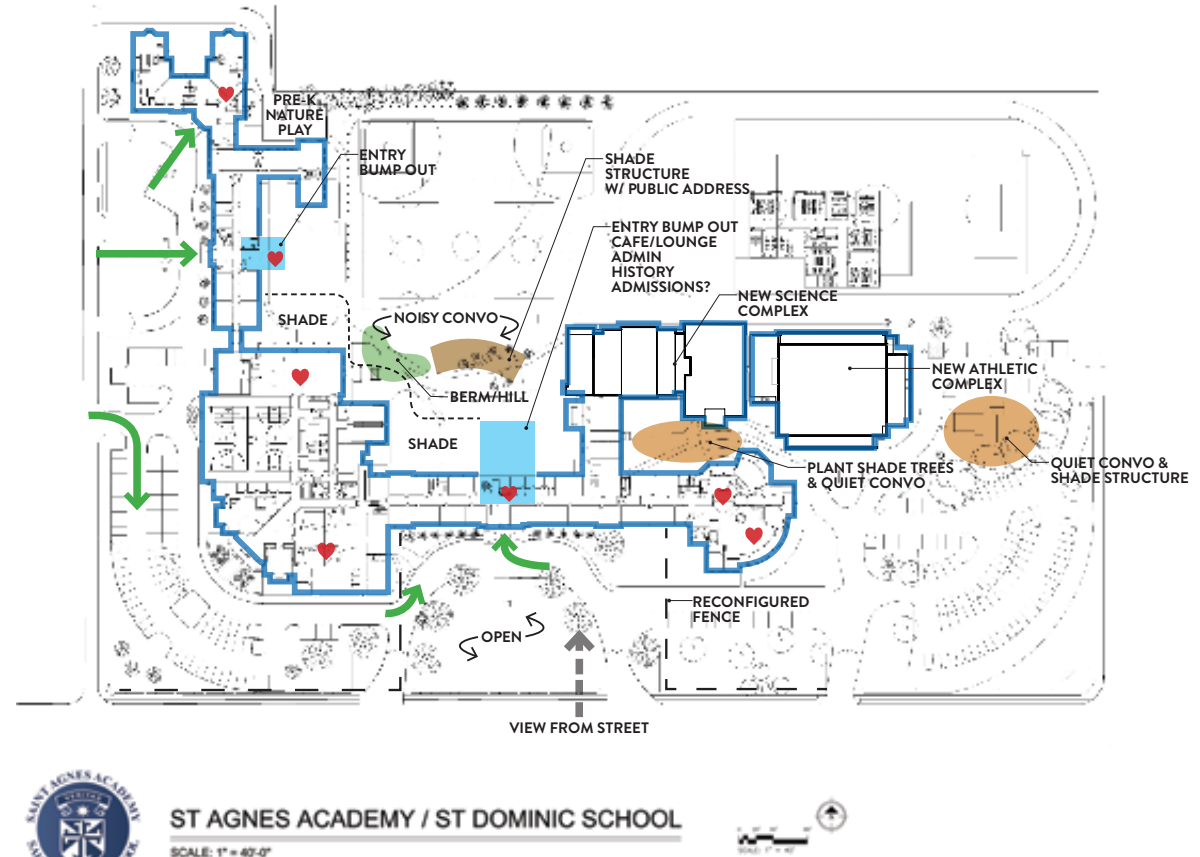


A community engagement exercise at Solebury School (Top)
Alan engages with the Metcalfe team (Bottom Left)

Case Study: St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School

At St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School in Memphis, TN, Alan approached the campus from the dual perspectives of Interpretive Master Planning and experience design. Over several days of IMP interviews and exercises, his team **uncovered important narratives and events within the school community that could be emphasized to create a more compelling school culture.** These interviews involved current community members, alumni, prospective families, staff, and teachers. Together, they discussed where students and the community spend the most time, their likes and dislikes about the school, significant annual events (school spirit events, graduations, clubs), and how people engage with the school. Using these processes, Alan identified core aspects of the school and new and existing spaces that could be utilized to host events. The information learned from **this exercise helped the school understand the “why” of future changes.**

Alan’s sensitivity to human experience also allowed him to identify and suggest improvements to enhance engagement and create a series of narratives about the way that the community interacted with the school. For example, touring the school through the lens of a prospective student and their family, Alan noticed that the school was difficult to find, lacked clear wayfinding, and was surrounded by an imposing steel fence that conveyed hostility to visitors. The main entrance was through a side door rather than through the school’s beautiful and historic columned entry. Alan recommended a series of changes that would signal to visitors that the school is open and welcoming and reflects the community’s identity. These positive changes to the visitor experience not only enhance the school’s physical appearance but will also contribute to increasing enrollment.



Identifying the hearts of campus in the final IMP document.

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leading IMP exercises at schools and cultural institutions.

Tom Hood, President, St. Agnes Academy – St. Dominic School

3.3: “Out on a Limb” Tree Canopy Walk

Organization: Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania

Location: Philadelphia, PA

**ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD
& DESIGN FIRM**

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

2009

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner, Designer

CHALLENGE

After seeing the excited visitors at London’s Kew Gardens’ temporary painter’s scaffolding—which took visitors up into the tree canopy—Executive Director Paul Meyer thought a similar exhibit could create even more excitement at the Morris Arboretum. The challenge was to **create a permanent attraction for the arboretum that could lure families back for repeat visits** by teaching them about trees from the thrilling vantage of a forest canopy.

ROLE

Alan was involved in this project from its inception, leading the team in design, attending all meetings, guiding the project forward, and coordinating with the team who produced the interpretive and wayfinding components. Alan and his team collaborated with the Arboretum to refine the project’s goals and construct a narrative that would effectively communicate the story of the arboretum’s tree collection.

“[Out on a Limb] **surpasses** [our] educational and experiential aspirations...in an **original, creative, engaging** and totally thrilling manner.”

David Hollenberg, University Architect, University of Pennsylvania



“Birds’ nest” and walkway



50' above the ground

OUTCOME

Metcalfe designed a unique treetop experience for visitors to learn from nature. The exhibit extends along 450 feet of elevated pathways within the arboretum's forest, balancing perceived risk with safety to create a space where visitors can learn, play, and lounge in the forest canopy.

Drawing inspiration from various sources, including industrial mining rigs in the southwest, Baltimore Oriole birds' nests, Chinese moon gates, and a pavilion reminiscent of a traditional Japanese tea house, **Out on a Limb was designed to encourage return visits through opportunities for informal learning, exploration, and play.**

"Squirrel Scramble," an open-net climb suspended 50 feet above the ground, acts as a kind of "sky wading pool" for families to gather. The "invisinet" railings, with their 3,000 lb. test strength, provide moments of perceived risk for both children and their parents. Rolling to the bottom of the nets, families can socially engage with one another (breaking the social contract of not talking with strangers), while young visitors are empowered by the feeling of fearlessly jumping into the netting high above the forest floor.

As visitors move through the exhibit, the views focus on the tree artifacts rather than the structure itself. The design team paid meticulous attention to the choice of materials. The steel gratings were deliberately designed to create a sense of instability. The materials visitors interact with, from the natural wood branch rails to the netting, were designed to be warm to the touch.

Akin to strolling through a Japanese garden, the canopy walk offers graceful transitions from one vista to another, providing a sense of wonder with every step. Though elevated 50 feet above the ground, Metcalfe designed for accessibility, ensuring that grandparents and wheelchair users could easily access the attraction. The result is an exhibit that visitors of all ages want to explore again and again.

On average, visitors to Out on a Limb spend 47 minutes on-site (compared to the seven minutes visitors typically spend at exhibits). **Upon opening in 2009, attendance and membership increased by a remarkable 30 percent.** Out on a Limb received the "Buildy Award" from the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums in recognition of this sustainable growth.

The project has won top design awards from AIA Pennsylvania and AIA Philadelphia and left a significant mark in the field. **The design team from the Wild Center in Tupper, NY drew direct inspiration from the site,** incorporating numerous components of the canopy walk into their own project.

AWARDS

- 2015** Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, "Buildy" Award
- 2012** International Galvanizing Awards, Highly Commended
- 2010** **AIA Pennsylvania, Architectural Excellence Award, Citation of Merit**
AIA Philadelphia Awards for Design Excellence, Gold Medal Award
American Association of Museums, Excellence in Exhibition Design Award
International Making Cities Livable Design Awards, Green Places Award
Best of Philly® Awards

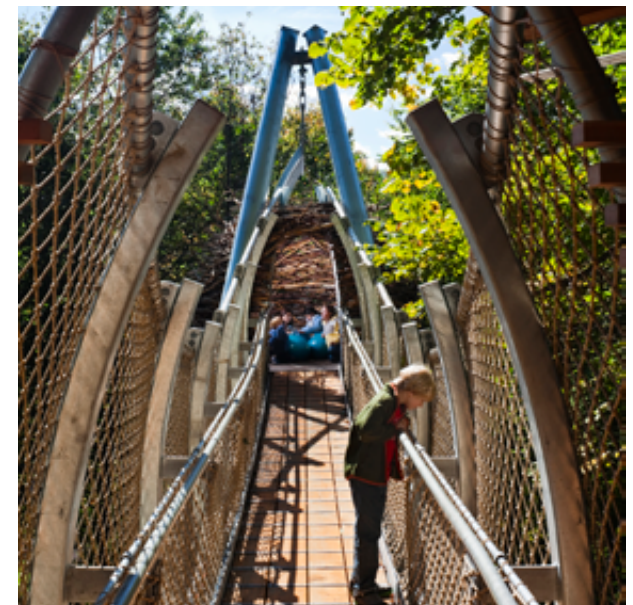
DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leading design team and client collaboration.

David Hollenberg, University Architect (ex officio), University of Pennsylvania



Netting from below



Bridge to the "birds' nest"

3.4: AFS Outside

Organization: Abington Friends School

Location: Jenkintown, PA

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD & DESIGN FIRM

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

2012-2016

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner, Designer

CHALLENGE

This multi-phase project encompasses two nature play areas: AFS Garden Station (Phase One), catering to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students and AFS Headwaters (Phase Two), designed primarily for grades 1-4 and some use by middle school students in grades 5-8. Together, these areas, collectively referred to as “AFS Outside,” hold a central role in the school’s curriculum. Comparable to traditional classrooms or laboratories, the primary objective of AFS Outside was to foster a strong connection between students and the natural environment, enabling them to establish lifelong associations between their activities and their surroundings.

The school had previously developed plans for a nature playground adjacent to their early childhood classrooms. Metcalfe’s challenge was to **create a space for unstructured physical play that would serve as the centerpiece for the garden experience.**

This new play area had to align with the school’s educational philosophy. Rooted in Reggio-inspired principles, AFS’s curriculum emphasizes child-directed learning, direct engagement with nature, and inclusivity for families.



Pre-K play area



Middle school area

ROLE

In both phases of AFS Outside, Alan worked closely with the design team, including the landscape architect and the contractor (for the design build portion of the job). For the first phase, the school internally developed a program that reflected their mission and teaching philosophy; Alan worked with AFS to create the physical manifestation of that program.

While meeting with the school's team about the direction for Garden Station, Alan saw a display of models that the children made about their ideal imaginary playground structure. Seeing that they all looked like houses, Alan saw an opportunity to include the students' visions in their work. He worked with the team, as well as administrators, faculty, and the children themselves, to **create a signature play structure within the Reggio precepts that was open-ended and not prescriptive, one reflective of the ideals of enclosure, shelter, socializing and gathering** that we all know from our own houses.

In Phase Two, Alan worked with the design team to clarify the goals for the Headwaters play area. Aimed at a middle school group, this space emphasized physical development, socializing and perceived risk—the basis for all forms of play—within the context of an informal outdoor learning environment.

OUTCOME

AFS Outside showcases Alan's dedication to designing socially engaging spaces that combine the rigors of exhibit design and architecture. As in many of Metcalfe's projects, the collision of these two disciplines resulted in a signature structure that **challenges its users to explore and grow within the context of perceived risk and play, all while emphasizing the school's mission and learning goals.**

At AFS Garden Station, younger students can work on their social skills, hide from each other, jump from stump to stump, and play make-believe. At AFS

Headwaters, older students can be found swinging from hanging ropes, testing their physical agility against increasingly higher climbing platforms, playing in and pumping water, and running through the tall grasses.

The completed structure is representative of Alan's commitment to designing for human experience, and his belief that people are happiest when immersed in warm, welcoming spaces that encourage interaction with the natural world.

AWARDS

- 2016** Named one of Goric's Top 5 Outdoor Classrooms in the World
- 2012** AFS's nature playground was the first Nature Explore Classroom in Pennsylvania to be certified by the Arbor Day Foundation.

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leading design team and client collaboration.

Rich Nourie, Head of School (ex officio), Abington Friends School



Netting experience



Natural life for students



Water play classroom

3.5: Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens

Organization: Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation

Location: Midland, MI

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD & DESIGN FIRM

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

2018

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner, Designer

CHALLENGE

The Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens aspired to create an immersive outdoor experience for families, fostering community engagement. The project needed to connect two adjacent campuses and repurpose existing structures while maintaining cohesiveness and telling the story of the site through an overarching campus design.

This vision required innovative planning and design solutions in the form of master planning gestures. The design team was also tasked with creating a series of memorable events to keep visitors engaged and encourage return visits to the site, turning a previously sleepy campus into a vibrant, connected attraction.

ROLE

Alan played a pivotal role in planning for the project. As founding partner, he ensured that every element of the project harmonized with the client's deeply personal vision, translating the client's needs into a coherent and innovative design that emphasized the concept of open-ended play and resonated with the forest's surroundings.



Walkway experience



Nature playground



Swinging pods

“Metcalfe absorbed our vision and created a solution that took our institution to the next level in terms of design and measurable performance. Since opening day, our visitor count has increased dramatically, and we have brought joy to the lives of the families who visit the Forest; an exceptional return on our investment.”

Macauley (Mike) Whiting, President, The Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation

Alan actively participated in all project meetings, contributing insights and expertise that shaped the project's direction. In collaboration with the landscape architecture consultant, Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects, Inc., Alan played a central role in the master planning process, ensuring that the client's vision seamlessly integrated with the natural environment.

OUTCOME

The Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens stands as a testament to the transformative power of visionary design. **This project converted a lightly visited forest into a vibrant, accessible community space that reconnects people with nature.** Alan led the Metcalfe team to bring its sensibility and combined experience in architecture and experience design to this project.

The family patriarch Herbert Dow engaged in "open-ended play" while working in his beloved apple orchards, so Metcalfe and the client imagined a family play forest. Visitors encounter a series of "right-brained" experiences involving a progression of open fields and dark forests. They are not constrained to staying on trails; the more they wander, the closer they get to nature and opportunities for introspection. An expansive tree canopy walk winds its way through the forest letting visitors experience varied forest ecologies from new and imaginative perspectives.

Interconnected spaces and active zones include two bridges, an amphitheater, orchards, an expansive canopy walk (the longest in the United States), a nature play area, a visitor center, a nature classroom, and a cafe. The resulting design engages families, providing play space for children and their parents. In the playground, children can play on their own inside a "safe" fence, far enough from their parents that they can feel independent, but close enough that parents can "play" with their own friends as they sip coffee on the deck of the café. Whiting Forest is now a cherished destination for families and nature

enthusiasts alike, exceeding expectations in terms of design, functionality, and community engagement.

Attendance doubled upon opening, delivering an exceptional return on the client's investment.

This project is a realization of Alan's continued commitment to galvanizing communities through narrative and space. Whiting Forest showcases the power of the firm's multi-disciplinary background, and the strength of an experience design firm focused on human experience, play, and nature.

AWARDS

2020 American Architecture Award: Presented by the European Centre & The Chicago Athenaeum

Architizer A+ Award, Landscape & Planning, Public Parks, Finalist

SDS/2 Solid Steel Competition, Grand Prize in Commercial Small Tonnage

2019 AIA Tri-State, Bronze Award for Architectural Excellence

SARA National Design Award of Merit

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leading design team and client collaboration.

Macauley (Mike) Whiting, President (ex officio),
The Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation



Pond arm



Orchard arm



Perceived risk at the glass-floored orchard arm



Welcome center

3.6 EXHIBITS

Alan Metcalfe, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB

3.6: “Eco Yurt” Village

Organization: Camp Havaya

Location: South Sterling, PA

**ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD
& DESIGN FIRM**

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

2016

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner, Designer

CHALLENGE

Metcalfe was tasked with **expanding the existing campus of a summer camp to accommodate 90 co-ed campers while also demonstrating to its attendees the benefits of eco-friendly living** through a cluster of environmentally-conscious buildings. The project aimed to integrate and uphold a set of mission-driven objectives aligned with the cultural values of the former Jewish Reconstructionist Movement. These principles were to be harmoniously blended with the communal and joyful aspirations outlined by the camp’s staff and campers.

“Metcalfe’s **creativity, playfulness, and excitement** . . . is wonderful. It is clear that this **individual interaction is part of the firm’s philosophy**—not just another part of the job.”

Rabbi Isaac Saposnik, Executive Director,
Camp Havaya / Eco-Village



Conversation and fire



Gathering at the campus entry and bathhouses

ROLE

Alan played a pivotal role in shaping the initial concepts for the project, including conducting site visits alongside the camp's staff to gain a thorough understanding of the land's relationship to the site. Alan and his team engaged in strategic discussions regarding zoning parameters and leveraged their expertise from working with museums to facilitate group workshops. These workshops were instrumental in eliciting the aspirations of both campers and staff for the project and identifying the key spaces of their campus.

During this process, Alan and his team uncovered insights that led him to consider the applicability of the Interpretive Master Planning process in a broader project context. They formulated objectives aimed at enhancing social interactions and environmental sustainability.

OUTCOME

The design yielded yurts with communal fire pits, and a bathhouse featuring outdoor meeting spaces, capitalizing on the innate human need for social interaction.

Humans are inherently social creatures—a belief Alan has built his practice around, and a topic he explores in depth in his TedX talk “The Architecture of Instinct”—and the teenagers for whom this space is intended thrive on sociability. To leverage this behavior, Alan and his team strategically arranged the yurts and the performance center on a green area that showcases rain gardens and other ecologically-oriented features. The yurts, with their circular design, align with the camp's communal values and encourage campers to engage in social interaction by eliminating corners. They encircle a spacious fire pit with amphitheater-like seating.

The campus was intentionally crafted to have a natural flow throughout the day. In the morning, campers journey to the bathhouses along a pathway flanked by parallel stone walls. The sunlit

plaza outside the bathhouses serves as a social hub, a unique take on spaces typically avoided by campers. After a full day of engaging in summer camp activities, campers find ample opportunities for informal gatherings on the steps surrounding the grand fire pit which features inspiring Hebrew messages, effectively “setting the table” for social interaction and offering adolescents numerous chances to come together.

The new “Eco Yurt” Village is evidence of Alan's ability to adapt IMP to architectural design. The resulting sustainable solution layers activated spaces for social interaction and connection with environmentally-friendly elements like rain gardens, recycled materials, and energy efficient lighting.



Gathering detail at bathhouse exterior

AWARDS

2017 SARA National Design Award of Excellence

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: client collaboration and nominee's firm executed project.

Isaac Saposnik, Executive Director, Camp Havaya



Girls and boys bathhouse



Recycled materials at the locker rooms

3.7 EXHIBITS

Alan Metcalfe, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB

3.7: PhillyCAM

Location: Philadelphia, PA

**ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD
& DESIGN FIRM**

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

2013

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner, Designer

CHALLENGE

PhillyCAM, a public access media station and school in Philadelphia, wanted to **transform a 9,400 SF, mid-century modern building into a welcoming permanent headquarters**. Working under tight budget constraints, Metcalfe needed to ensure the facility was easy to find and promoted a sense of community.

ROLE

As Founding Partner, Alan orchestrated meetings with staff and senior leadership, collaborated closely with the team and client on design concepts, and guided the project's progression.



Sequential lighting at exterior



Concept Sketch

“Fabulous, even better real than imagined.”

Gretjen Clausing, Executive Director,
PhillyCAM

OUTCOME

Metcalfe's innovative approach resulted in a vibrant façade that artfully reflects this nonprofit organization's bold and colorful logo. A dynamic lighting scheme utilizing sequenced LED lights creates a visually captivating illusion of movement across the entire façade.

Incorporating graphic design with architecture, a prominent vertical sign and bold graphics guide visitors to the entrance while establishing a distinct and memorable graphic identity for the building. At street level, the expansive windows create an inviting, visual connection with the street, showcasing the facility's active television studio.

In collaboration with tech integrators, Metcalfe seamlessly incorporated affordable media technology into the design. Bright, inviting colors were strategically employed in transition areas, staircases, and doorways, enhancing the overall user-friendliness of the space while remaining cost-effective.



Video Performance Studio

AWARDS

- 2016** City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and the Community Design Collaborative Storefront Challenge, Best Overall Design
- 2015** IES Philadelphia Section Philament Award

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: client collaboration and nominee's firm executed project.

Gretjen Clausing, Executive Director, PhillyCAM



Cafe at Entry

3.8: Passive House Residence Hall

Organization: Solebury School

Location: New Hope, PA

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD
& DESIGN FIRM

Metcalfe

COMPLETION DATE

December 2023

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Founding Partner

CHALLENGE

Located on 140 acres in Pennsylvania, Solebury School needed to expand its capacity for boarding students. The school's vision was to **create a residence hall—the first new residence building in decades—that authentically mirrored the essence of its high school students.** The building needed to not only meet the needs of current students but also demonstrate to prospective students that living in the dormitory aligns with their lifestyle. The project also needed to incorporate living spaces for teachers and their families and accommodate the Solebury community's culture.

ROLE

As the Founding Partner, Alan actively participated in meetings, particularly in the early stages of project development. These meetings revolved around key objectives, including aligning the project with the community's needs, translating the school's moral values into sustainable building practices, defining the budget and schedule, and **conceptualizing a unique structure that would provide memorable experiences for both students and faculty** residing within the building.



Exterior View



Interpretive Master Planning exercise on campus

"I have worked with many firms over the years, and often I feel like I get a cookie-cutter result. Not with Metcalfe. . . . The new residence hall is the first of many new buildings we imagine coming out of our master planning exercise. I strongly suspect we will be working with Metcalfe for years to come."

Tom Wilschutz, Head of School, Solebury School

OUTCOME

To address these complexities, Metcalfe initiated a series of Interpretive Master Planning exercises to engage students in enjoyable and interactive ways. The team's collaboration with the Solebury community extended to various stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, alumni, and parents. The exercise revealed that the Solebury community highly values outdoor experiences and yearns for gathering spaces akin to treehouses. Metcalfe translated this insight into the design by creating a series of intimate gathering spaces on each floor, mimicking a treehouse with views from above.

In response to the nuances of the school's outdoors-centric culture and forward-looking pedagogy, the building also needed to be Passive House design certified for ultra-low energy use. The project is the first Passive House certified dormitory in the U.S. Achieving this **technically demanding set of sustainability criteria highlights the firm's technical prowess and unwavering commitment to the community's values.** This project will serve as the foundation for subsequent developments outlined in a modified master plan.



Social Spaces



"Treehouse" window seat



Site master plan

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: client collaboration and nominee's firm executed project.

Tom Wilschutz, Head of School, Solebury School

3.9: The Universal Sphere™

Organization: Comcast

Client: Subconsultant to Show Canada
(subcontractor to LF Driscoll)

Location: Philadelphia, PA

ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF RECORD & DESIGN FIRM

Foster and Partners
Metcalf

COMPLETION DATE
2018

ROLE OF NOMINEE
Founding Partner

CHALLENGE

Metcalf faced a demanding timeline to assist Show Canada in creating an exhilarating attraction within the lobby of the Comcast Technology Center in Philadelphia. Notable challenges included designing an IMAX theater skin that allowed for air conditioning, implementing acoustic sound reinforcement, and engineering an electro-mechanical automated seating system capable of rising 15 feet into the air while spinning.

ROLE

In his capacity as Partner, Alan participated in development meetings that involved collaboration with the entire design and construction team. He attended separate meetings with mechanical, sound, and lighting consultants, as well as the internal project manager.

OUTCOME

Metcalf collaborated closely with Show Canada to develop the design for a one-of-a-kind immersive multimedia experience. Initially based on a concept provided by the lead architect from Foster and Partners, the interior of this 40-foot diameter, soundproof, triple-layered sphere seamlessly combines elements of a planetarium and an IMAX screen. A rotating lift elevates the seating platform to the optimal viewing position; this required extensive interaction with local city building code officials, who ultimately categorized the project as an amusement park ride.

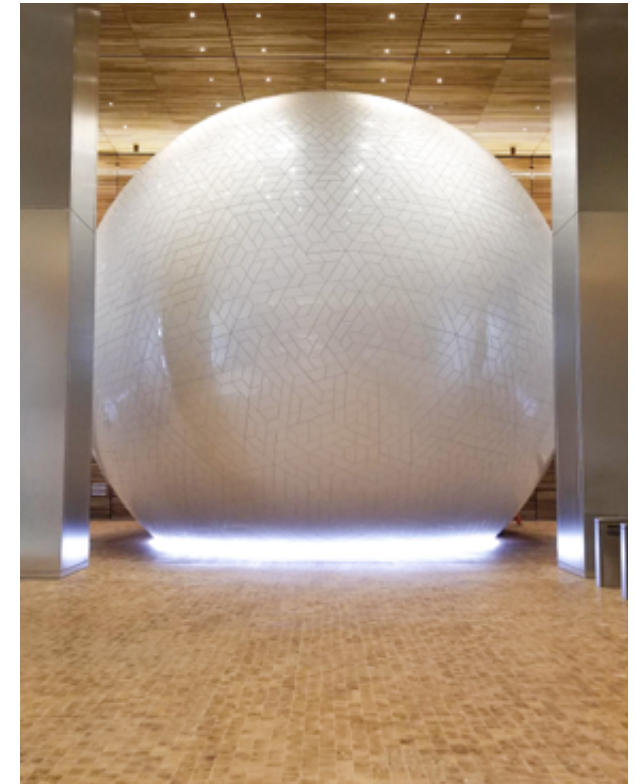
Representing Show Canada's interests, Metcalf spearheaded the team responsible for obtaining permits for the project as an amusement ride, coordinating cooling and ventilation systems, devising a fire suppression strategy, selecting interior finishes, and ensuring compliance with accessibility requirements.

This project demonstrates the value of a practice with diverse skill sets. Leveraging the firm's expertise in architecture and exhibit design, experience design for user engagement allowed Metcalf to deliver this unique attraction within the time constraints.

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: nominee's firm executed project.

Dan Sobel, Project Manager, Show Canada



Exterior elevation



Interior construction

4: REFERENCES



Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens
Midland, MI