

Cesar Pelli, Design Architect

Overture Center for the Arts / Madison Museum of Contemporary Art

Cesar Pelli was born in Argentina where he earned a Diploma in Architecture from the University of Tucumán. He first worked in the offices of Eero Saarinen serving as Project Designer for several projects, including the TWA Terminal Building at JFK Airport in New York, and Morse and Stiles Colleges at Yale University. After this apprenticeship, he was Director of Design at DMJM and, later, Partner for Design at Gruen Associates, both in Los Angeles. Throughout these years, he designed several award-winning projects, including the San Bernardino City Hall in San Bernardino, California; the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, California; and the United States Embassy in Tokyo, Japan.

In 1977, Mr. Pelli became Dean of the Yale University School of Architecture and also founded Cesar Pelli & Associates (now Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects). Mr. Pelli resigned his post as Dean in 1984 but continues to lecture on architecture. Since the firm's establishment, Mr. Pelli has personally originated and directed the design of each of its projects.

Mr. Pelli has avoided formalistic preconceptions in his designs. He believes that the aesthetic qualities of a building should grow from the specific characteristics of each project, such as its location, its construction technology and its purpose. In search for the most appropriate response to each project, his designs have covered a wide range of solutions and materials. Cesar Pelli's contributions to the practice of architecture are characterized by his belief that buildings should be "responsible citizens." He has written and lectured on these subjects and his designs have benefited by these considerations.

Mr. Pelli has written extensively on architectural issues and his work has been widely published and exhibited, with ten books and several issues of professional journals dedicated to his designs and theories. He has received eight honorary degrees and over 150 awards for design excellence. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Academy of Design, the International Academy of Architecture and l'Academie d'Architecture de France.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) awarded Cesar Pelli the 1995 Gold Medal, which recognizes a lifetime of distinguished achievement and outstanding contributions. In 2004, Mr. Pelli was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for the design of the Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art will complete Overture Center, the heart of the arts in the city of Madison. It will also be a wonderful structure in itself, at the triangular corner of North Henry and State Streets. Its glass prow will be one of the most recognizable forms in Madison. Its roof, with a sculpture garden and a restaurant, will add a new dimension to cultural life in the city, and its galleries will accommodate the changing exhibitions in a luminous and generous space.

– Cesar Pelli, 2006

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