

# Western Interiors

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005

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# Santa Fe Intervention

Spears Architects lends the Lannan Foundation's historic New Mexico campus a contemporary dimension

**W**E SEE THE FOUNDATION AND ITS ARCHITECTURE AS IN AND OF THE COMMUNITY," says J. Patrick Lannan, Jr., president of the Lannan Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "The four buildings fit in well and aren't obtrusive at all. There's nothing kitsch about them. They fit who we believe we are." The Lannan campus, with its historic facades and modern interiors, mirrors the foundation's philanthropic mission to support long-standing expressions of creativity, such as art and literature, in their most contemporary forms. Its location in New Mexico, home to nineteen pueblos and four reservations, also meshes with the foundation's commitment to indigenous communities.

Prior to its move to Santa Fe in 1997, the foundation was based in Los Angeles. Its gallery there exhibited works from the foundation's substantial collection of contemporary American and European art that had been



**top:** James Horn of Spears Architects used the shell of an 1880s church (left) to create a new meetinghouse for the Lannan Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "The building was rehabilitated to recall the original structure while providing a backdrop for contemporary interventions," says Horn.  
**above:** Landscaping by Spears Architects softens the entrance.





amassed during the lifetime of J. Patrick Lannan, Sr., who started the foundation in 1960. In the mid-nineties, under the direction of Lannan's son, J. Patrick Lannan, Jr., the foundation decided to disperse more than one thousand works of art to seventy-eight museums, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The gifting was part of a shift in emphasis as the foundation's mission moved toward social-justice issues.

The foundation still remains active in the contemporary art world, however: It is engaged in a ten-year collaboration with the Dia Center for the Arts in Beacon, New York, and it continues to purchase new works of art, typically donating them to museums within five years. Furthermore, the foundation hosts a Readings and Conversations series, which brings prominent writers to Santa Fe. "The thinking that the literary program has brought us in contact with over the last fifteen years has had a large impact on the foundation."

**above:** "Glass is used extensively to expand the space," says Horn. The meeting room features a storefront window between two glass doors that lead to the courtyard. A beige scrim conceals the rebuilt ceiling trusses. The soffit and floors are maple.

**left:** Two interior spaces flanking the entry were built to house catering, storage and restrooms. "A glass reveal separates these areas from the shell of the old church," says Horn.





The Benjamin M. Read House, a circa 1883 Territorial-style adobe residence with straw-green stucco and decorative stained glass, serves as the foundation's program building. Inside, the passageways are filled with light streaming through glass paneling. In the conference room hangs a James Turrell drawing of Roden Crater, one of many contemporary art projects the foundation has supported.

The latest addition to the Santa Fe campus is the meetinghouse, a renovated circa 1881 Congregational Church. Quaker meetinghouses and Native American chapter houses, which served as gathering spaces for tribal meetings, informed the foundation's search for a structure that could be used for board meetings, multimedia presentations and dinners. Spears Architects in Santa Fe utilized the shell of the church to create this space. "The idea was to get the building back to its historic nature and to wrap it with modern ideas," says lead designer James Horn. "Overall, the designs that I do are heavily influenced by the interplay of translucency, opacity and materiality."

The exterior facade reflects the historic church with its Victorian corbels and moldings. On either side of the entry are what Horn calls interior buildings:

**above:** The courtyard includes aspens, blue fescue grass and crushed rock. Benches are built into a stuccoed wall that encloses the area. **right:** At the front of the meetinghouse, *miscanthus* and lavender grow beneath new sandblasted glass windows in their historic frames.







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## foundation

The one on the right houses restrooms and a storage area; the one on the left contains a catering station. They are separated from the original structure by glass reveals. Glass doors open to the meeting space.

The firm created a tranquil interior through its selection of materials and its treatment of light and sound. Maple floors, a maple soffit and eight sandblasted windows create a welcoming meeting space. A beige ceiling scrim, which extends just shy of the north and south walls, reveals a glimpse of the historic brick walls that are otherwise covered in plaster. It also references the plane of the original plaster ceiling line. Above the scrim, which is transparent when lighted, are rebuilt wood trusses along with acoustic panels that help prevent echoes from interfering with screenings or conversation. The sandblasted windows draw the eye to a large picture window framed by two glass doors that open onto the courtyard on the north side.

The firm's principal architect, Beverley Spears, is also a landscape architect, experience that influenced the courtyard design. Linear landscaping with aspen trees, stone, grass, water and rock links the meeting-house to the rest of the campus. A wall around the courtyard has several benches, a fireplace, storage space and a fountain built into it. It also screens the courtyard from an alley and provides an exterior alcove for crowds that spill out of the meetinghouse. This architectural flourish is a reminder that although the work of a foundation begins inside its offices, its endeavors come to fruition in the outside world. +

### LANNAN FOUNDATION

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Santa Fe, NM 87501  
505.986.8160  
[www.lannan.org](http://www.lannan.org)

### FALL 2005 EVENTS

**September 21** Robert Fisk with Amy Goodman  
**October 5** Salman Rushdie with Michael Silverblatt  
**October 12** Joy Harjo, Simon Ortiz and Leslie Marmon Silko  
**October 26** W. S. Merwin with Robert Hass

**Tickets** Lensic Performing Arts Center,  
505.988.1234, [www.lensic.com](http://www.lensic.com)