

# CAMILO PARRA

2008 NOMINEE

BEN BREWER

YOUNG ARCHITECT

OF THE YEAR

## CAMILO PARRA

### **REGISTERED ARCHITECT**

State of Texas

Reg. # 17121

September 2000



### **PRESIDENT**

Parra Design Group, Ltd.





SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

12 February 2008

To the Young Architect Selection Committee:

I am writing to nominate, and strongly support, Camilo Parra for the 2008 AIA Young Architect Award. I have admired Camilo's own architectural work and his commitment to the larger realm of architectural service. In addition to his practice, he currently serves on the Board of Directors for both the Rice Design Alliance and AIA Houston. He participates in a wide range of community projects and teaches part-time at Prairie View A&M University. Additionally, Camilo displays knowledge in architecture and related fields that have emerged from a rich and diverse background of experiences.

With the Rice Design Alliance, Camilo has served on multiple committees, from fundraising to programs. He is currently Chair of RDA Partners, encouraging young designers at the start of their career into greater participation with RDA's programs. The results of the Partners' design "charrette" for a pedestrian bridge at Memorial Park have been adopted by the Memorial Park Conservancy with plans to construct the winning design. As a member of RDA's Program Committee, Camilo has spent volunteer hours helping to assemble a wide variety of speakers and tours that focus on all issues of design. Camilo was a key participant in helping to organize several recent lecture series: "Design Goes Mainstream" and "30 North 60 South, Latin American Architecture"—both open to the public and filled to capacity!

With the AIA, Camilo is the Residential Committee Chair and member of the Urban Design Committee. In the current RDA and AIA collaboration to sponsor a competition for affordable housing, Camilo has shared his unique experience in housing and offered vital information about pricing, codes, and building materials. His input as a team member enriches any process.

I have particularly admired his own work in housing: his projects are innovative and offer many first buyers an extremely well designed product at a price they can afford. In his many professional and volunteer endeavors, Camilo generously gives his time and attention in ways that always display his talent, care, and commitment. It is a pleasure to nominate him and to give him my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Nonya Grenader, FAIA  
Professor in Practice, Rice University  
Associate Director, Rice Building Workshop  
President, Rice Design Alliance

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I found myself across the bus yard, in a two-story red, brick building with its vinyl flooring soaked in wax polishes, in the project engineering department of Via Metro Transit San Antonio. This was my first job after architecture school. I had worked part time while in school for a high-end residential builder as a gofer and project cleaner, but now I was at Via in San Antonio. Eager to learn and surrounded by levels of bureaucracy, I took on the back log of park and rides that had to be built before the federal funds were taken away. The head of the department decided that we should build the park and rides as construction manager with contractors for different trades such as buildings and site work. I remember one day being surrounded by these contractors in a discussion; I felt tears swell up as we argued about who was responsible for installing the utilities as no one wanted to enter the five foot zone around the building. There are smells to construction I love: wet concrete drying, cut pine, humid joint compound. Like plants growing in fresh earth, buildings come together. I was enthralled by this process.

Visiting my parents in Houston in the 90s, I saw the surge of inner-city development. Suddenly townhouses were sprouting everywhere, but the designs seemed insensitive and public space was disregarded; the news media pondered what has happened to design. In response, the government and building community revised the local development code to improve conditions. It was a seller's market and I decided to enter it. I opened my own firm here with a friend from San Antonio, bought a lot in Montrose, and set out to develop my first project. I wanted to be a responsible architect and better the

community. The new code had not come into effect, and many developers were busy filing for development permits in order not to have to comply. Even though we did not have to comply, we decided to design the townhouses in accordance with the new code as we saw its virtues for the community. The townhouses were well received and made the cover of *Texas Architect*.

I have continued to develop townhouses, and last year we built about 70 units. It is a source of tremendous pride when clients and members of the community praise us for our achievements. Clients are happy with the design, and neighbors within the communities we develop hold us in high regard. Notwithstanding, I also take pride in my volunteer work with the AIA and RDA as a service to and the advancement of my profession, to share knowledge with our colleagues, and educate the public about design and architecture in Houston.

In the following pages are my biography and professional accomplishments for your consideration.





# CAMILO PARRA

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 1969–1998

CHICAGO, IL

1969

BORN IN CHICAGO, IL.

MOTHER IS NANCY MIKOLAS NATIVE OF CHICAGO FROM CZECH IMMIGRANT FAMILY.

FATHER IS MANUEL PARRA, WHO IS BORN IN BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, AND MOVES TO CHICAGO AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN TO ATTEND COLLEGE.

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

1970

MOVES TO BOGOTA, COLOMBIA.

DIAGNOSED WITH PNEUMONIA AND DOCTOR ADVISES PARENTS THAT HE SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM CHICAGO'S HARSH WINTER.

PARENTS TEACH AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBIA.

BATON ROUGE, LA

1972

MOVES TO BATON ROUGE, LA.

MOTHER ACCEPTS JOB AT LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY.

WASHINGTON, DC

1973

MOVES TO WASHINGTON, DC.

FATHER ACCEPTS JOB AT THE WORLD BANK.

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

1974

MOVES TO SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR.

FATHER IS TRANSFERRED WITH THE WORLD BANK.

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

1979

CIVIL WAR IN EL SALVADOR ESCALATES WITH MURDER OF

ARCHBISHOP ROMERO.

CAMILO IS SENT TO LIVE WITH HIS UNCLE AND AUNT IN GUATEMALA CITY.

FATHER HAS SINCE LEFT WORLD BANK AND HAS FOUNDED HIS CONSULTING COMPANY WITH OFFICES IN HONDURAS AND COSTA RICA.

PRIOR TO 1979, CAMILO LIVES FOR A FEW MONTHS WITH HIS FATHER IN PUERTO CORTEZ, HONDURAS.

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

1980

MOVES TO SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA.

FATHER TRANSFERS HIS COMPANY DUE TO WAR IN EL SALVADOR.

EXETER, NH

1984

STARTS HIGH SCHOOL AT PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY IN EXETER, N.H.

CAMILO'S WRITING SKILLS FLOURISH, AND HE TAKES AN AVID INTEREST IN POETRY.

HIS POEMS RECEIVE ACCLAIM, AND HE WINS SCHOOL AWARD FOR POETRY.

FAMILY BEGINS TO CLOSE CONSULTING COMPANY IN COSTA RICA.

BOCA RATON, FL

1986

PARENTS MOVE TO BOCA RATON, FLORIDA.

FATHER ACCEPTS POSITION WITH BURROUGHS CORP. AFTER CLOSING THE COMPANY IN COSTA RICA.

CHICAGO, IL

1988

ENROLLS IN COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN CHICAGO, IL.

CAMILO CONTINUES TO WRITE AND STUDY POETRY AND IS AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS PRIZE. HIS WINNING ENTRY IS PUBLISHED IN THE CHICAGO REVIEW.

AUSTIN, TX

1991

GRADUATES FROM UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES.

WHILE IN CHICAGO, CAMILO TAKES AN INTEREST IN ARCHITECTURE AND STUDIES THE WORKS OF ADLER AND SULLIVAN, BURNHAM, MIES VAN DER ROHE, AND WRIGHT.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE IS ENTHRALLED WITH ANDEAN AND MESOAMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGY AND DECIDES HE WANTS TO PURSUE A CAREER IN ARCHITECTURE.

ENROLLS IN THE MASTER'S ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

IN AUSTIN, CAMILO FALLS IN LOVE WITH MENG YEH, A NATIVE OF TAIWAN WHO IS PURSUING HER DOCTORATE IN LINGUISTICS.

SAN ANTONIO, TX

1994

GRADUATES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN WITH A MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE.

MOVES TO SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, AND ACCEPTS A JOB OFFER WITH VIA METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AS A DEVELOPMENT PLANNER.

MENG ACCEPTS A TEACHING POSITION AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY.

HOUSTON, TX

1998

MOVES TO HOUSTON, TEXAS AND FOUNDS HIS FIRM PARRA DESIGN GROUP, LTD.

THE TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT CLIMATE IN HOUSTON IS FLOURISHING. CAMILO'S BACKGROUND IN CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN LEADS HIM TO START A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT VENTURE, YUPON PLACE TOWNHOUSES (A 3-UNIT PROJECT).

CAMILO DESIRES TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE STANDARD TOWNHOUSES AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET WITH A PRODUCT THAT HAS MORE ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND DESIGN.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## EDUCATION

- 1994**    **University of Texas at Austin**  
Master of Architecture
- 1991**    **University of Chicago**  
B.A. in Latin American Studies
- 1988**    **Phillips Exeter Academy**  
High School Diploma

## ACCREDITATION

- 2000**    **Registered Architect, State of Texas**  
Registration Number 17121  
September

## AWARDS

- 2004**    **Merit Award**  
Rice Design Alliance  
Urban Legends Charrette
- 2004**    **Merit Award**  
AIA Houston for Fairview Town Homes
- 2002**    **Merit Award**  
AIA Houston for Las Cicadas Town Homes
- 1990**    **Academy of American Poets Prize**  
University of Chicago

## EMPLOYMENT

- 2006–present**     **Prairie View A&M University**  
Prairie View, TX  
Adjunct Assistant Professor, School of Architecture
- 1998–Present**     **Parra Design Group, Ltd.**  
Houston, TX  
President
- 1997–1998**     **Davis, Durand-Hollis, Rupe Architects**  
San Antonio, TX  
Project Manager
- 1996–1997**     **Consulting Engineers Group**  
San Antonio, TX  
Project Leader
- 1995–1996**     **Via Metropolitan Transit**  
San Antonio, TX  
Development Planner

## ORGANIZATIONS

I have joined the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Rice Design Alliance (RDA) to keep abreast of new developments in the architectural field and share my knowledge and experience with others. I have taken an active position with both these groups and have volunteered my services on a variety of projects, including serving on boards and committees, which are illustrated on the following pages.

## DIRECTORSHIPS

### **AIA EMERGING PROFESSIONALS, YOUNG ARCHITECT FORUM**

#### **Public Relations Director**

Appointed January 2008

As the Public Relations Director, I have coordinated publication of the Committee's journal, Connection. I have also interviewed Fellows for the AIA 150 at 150 Project. The Project commemorates the 15th anniversary of the Young Architect Forum and 150th anniversary of the AIA by interviewing 150 fellows about mentorship. The interviews are available as pod casts on the AIA website.

AIA / YAF

### **RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE (RDA)**

#### **Director**

Appointed May 2006

As a member of the board of directors for the RDA, I have helped create a new level of membership that supports the activities of the Partners group, the younger networking branch of the RDA. I participate in the Executive Committee of the RDA Board through my involvement with Partners.



### **AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA)**

#### **Houston Chapter**

#### **Director**

Appointed October 2005

During my tenure as an AIA board member, I have seen the transition of the office to the new Architecture Center downtown. I have been responsible for the coordination of Architecture Month; and organized several events and exhibits for it.



AIA Houston



## AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA)

### RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE

#### Chair

Since January 2008

I recently organized a tour of John Staub's Rienzi with architectural historian Stephen Fox that was very successful. I plan to organize tours of local architect's residential projects throughout the year.

### MICHAEL G. MEYERS STUDENT COMPETITION

#### Member

Since August 2007

This past January, I volunteered for the Competition's workshop. During the workshop, we worked with high school students on architectural concepts such as plan, massing, volume, etc., using case studies.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

#### Chair

2007

I planned several seminars for the committee and led discussions after monthly film screenings related to architecture.

### YOUNG ARCHITECT FORUM

#### Member

Since 2005

As a member of the Forum, I have helped organize several exhibits including the Memorial City Mall Exhibit that showcased architect's projects, and Fotofest which features photographic work by architects for the biennale.

### SMALL FIRM ROUNDTABLE

#### Chair

2004-05

As chair of the Roundtable, I helped create the committee's website and planned many forums including pin-ups of colleagues work, details, and tips the committee wanted to share. I also organized an exhibit of art by architects.





## AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA)



### **SANDCASTLE COMMITTEE**

#### **Juror**

I served on the Sandcastle jury for two consecutive years. One year, I was on the jury for the Best in Show category.

### **URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE**

#### **Member**

Since 2002

An active participant in monthly meetings, I participated with the AIA RUDAT (Regional and Urban Development Advisory Team), writing a white paper regarding inner loop development. The recent topic of the General Plan has prompted a large response from the community and the committee's goal is to create a report for City Council in order to improve Houston's built environment.



### **SMALL PROJECT FORUM REGIONAL ADVISER**

#### **AIA Knowledge Community**

1998–2004

I wrote various articles for the SPF Journal as the regional adviser for the Small Project Forum. Articles ranged in scope from tips, profiles, and personal experiences.



## RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE (RDA)

### BRIDGING THE BRIDGE CHARRETTE

#### Sub Committee Member

I was involved in the Charrette as the chair of Partners. We worked with the Memorial Park Conservancy to create a design competition for a pedestrian bridge across Memorial Avenue that links both sides of the Park.



### PARTNERS COMMITTEE

#### Chair

Since July 2007

As chair of Partners, I have coordinated the design charrettes. This year's charrette we will work with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership on a program for movable concession stands along the Bayou. The Partners group also plans to develop a show of young designer's projects.

### THE 99K HOUSING COMPETITION COMMITTEE

#### Member

Since January 2007

As a member of the 99K House Committee, I have helped with the site selection, editing the program, and creating the project budget. Because of my expertise with design-build, I plan to be active in the construction phase.



### PROGRAM COMMITTEE

#### Member

May 2005

I have been on the subcommittee for the following lecture programs: Design Goes Mainstream and 30N 60S: Latin American Architecture Revisited. Design Goes Mainstream highlighted designs of Graves' Target Collection, IKEA, IDEO, and Wallpaper. 30 N 60 S has brought architects in the vanguard from Latin America that are working on important, social projects.



### PLAN CBD CHARRETTE

#### Sub Committee Chair

2005

I was responsible for the Plan CBD Charrette which looked at solving an urban design problem in the southern part of Houston's Central Business District. Centered around the new park, the Charrette tackled a string of empty lots along La Branch Street hoping to create a dense, mixed-use typology.



## LECTURES & JURY

### LECTURE

#### **“Design/Build: Practicum and Praxis”**

Rice Design Alliance Symposium

January 28, 2006



### LECTURE

#### **“Developing Townhouses”**

Texas Society of Architects

65th Annual Convention

October 23, 2004

### LECTURE

#### **“Two Projects: Townhouses in Houston & House in the Rainforest”**

Fresh Forum, Rice Design Alliance

May 6, 2004

### JUROR

#### **Parade of Homes**

Santa Fe, New Mexico

August 2006

## AFFILIATIONS

### HOUSTON MINORITY BUSINESS COUNCIL

Member since 2003



### HOUSTON HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Member since 2004



### U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

Member since 2004



## PUBLICATIONS

### PROJECTS

#### Architectural Digest

Feature on El Refugio Home

August 2002

#### Texas Architect

Cover and article on Yupon Place Town Homes

May 2001

#### Texas Magazine, Houston Chronicle

Single-family residence featured in "Special Affections"

Home Design Section

November 9, 1997

### ARTICLES

#### "YAF and COF Go On the Air...Digitally"

AIA Young Architects Forum Journal Connection

January/February 2008

#### "God and the Operable Windows"

AIA Small Project Practitioners Journal No.35: The Wow Factor

October 2005

#### "Water Doctor"

AIA Small Project Journal No. 24: Detail

April 2002

#### "Tip: Stay High-Tech"

AIA Small Project Journal No. 18: The Electronic Age

April 2000

#### "designBUILD"

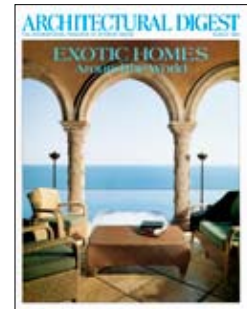
AIA Small Project Journal No. 17: Alternate Delivery Systems

December 1999

#### "Profile: Keith Shuley: Attorney Academic"

AIA Small Project Forum Journal No. 15: Contracts & Liabilities

April 1999





## PROJECTS | HOUSTON



**2006–present: Bastrop Plaza Townhouses**  
Member of Design Team, Developer & Builder  
15 townhouses located in Houston/Third Ward  
1600-1900 S.F. each unit



**2006: Maryland House**  
Lead Designer & Builder  
Single family house in Houston/Montrose  
3500 S.F.



**2005–present: Upper West End Townhouses**  
Member of Design Team, Developer & Builder  
200 townhouses in 4 phases located in Houston/West End  
1400-1850 S.F. each unit



**2004–present: City Promenade Townhouses**  
Member of Design Team, Developer & Builder  
32 townhouses in 3 phases located in Houston/Midtown  
1700-2500 S.F. each unit



**2003: Friendswood Retail Center**  
Member of Design Team  
Strip center in Friendswood, Texas  
10,000 S.F.



**2002: Yupon House**  
Lead Designer & Builder  
Single family house in Houston/Montrose  
3500 S.F.



## PROJECTS | HOUSTON

### 2001: Fairview Townhouses

Member of Design Team, Developer & Builder  
2 townhouses in Houston/Montrose  
2600 S.F. each unit



### 2000: Las Cicadas Townhouses

Member of Design Team, Developer & Builder  
8 townhouses in Houston/Montrose  
2600 S.F. each unit



### 2000: Yupon Place Townhouses

Lead Designer, Developer & Builder  
3 townhouses in Houston/Montrose  
2800 S.F.



### 2000: El Refugio House

Lead Designer  
Vacation house in Costa Rica  
5000 S.F.



### 1998: Briscoe Elementary Renovations and Additions

Member of Design Team  
New classroom wing  
San Antonio, Texas



### 1997: Hawthorne House

Lead Designer  
Single family house in Houston/Montrose  
4000 S.F.



## PROJECTS | SAN ANTONIO



### **1997: West Avenue Elementary Renovations and Additions**

Member of Design Team  
New entry and nurse station  
San Antonio, Texas



### **1997: Thousand Oaks Elementary Renovations and Additions**

Member of Design Team  
New classroom wing  
San Antonio, Texas

### **1997: Mac Arthur Park Park Pavilion and Kitchen**

Lead Designer  
San Antonio, Texas

### **1996: Amtrak Station**

Member of Design Team  
New train station  
San Antonio, Texas

### **1995: Ingram Park & Ride**

Member of Design Team  
New park and ride facility  
San Antonio, Texas



### **1995: Randolph Park & Ride**

Lead Designer and Construction Manager  
New park and ride facility  
San Antonio, Texas



## NEIGHBORHOOD

In the shade of the falling  
summer sun glowing  
through the leaves  
a lady walking with crutches  
stops to sit down at the bench  
in front of mine  
to smoke a cigarette  
along the sidewalk.

A man in a suit  
comes home  
to the townhouse  
behind my bench  
the door opening  
to happy children,  
students linger to and from a dorm,  
and the hospital is quiet.

The dorm is adorned  
with flags  
for the World Cup  
students celebrating their  
lost team  
cars have the German flags  
waving.

2006

Integrated on the following pages are poems I have written over the years.

## BASTROP PLAZA 2006



Bastrop Plaza is in an area of the Third Ward that is being revitalized. The strategy was to create affordable townhouses without compromising quality and be consistent with the open floor plan we are known for. All the townhouses (1600–1900 S.F.) have three bedrooms and loft style living.

# BASTROP PLAZA





## ON THE INKA TRAIL

The Andes reach the Amazon  
not wanting to let go,  
boulders in the clouds  
rock shard fall down  
to the cascading  
river covered with musk  
smells of shrubs.

Birds whistle calling to you  
from the burrows so close  
then they stop singing  
when you look.

The clouds arrive and leave  
from below changing  
climate like the ocean  
whose edge is always moving away  
and comes back.

Fog, like foam,  
rises quickly  
from the river basin  
blanketing the ruins.

2007

## MARYLAND HOUSE 2006



Sited on a city infill lot of an older Houston neighborhood, the house is designed around a pool courtyard that allows natural light to enter. The living spaces have a direct relationship with the pool and open onto the pool deck. Wooden screen doors slide out of the wall so that the courtyard is always open to the house. The doors and floors, and some of the furniture is made out of Brazilian cherry wood that gives the house a consistent warmth. The clients are empty nesters and required separate work studios.

MARYLAND HOUSE







## PUNTA UVA

The ocean ignites  
its sound growling  
reaching earth protruding  
waves convulsing  
pelicans diving.

Storm clouds moving  
giving way  
to sun descending,  
fiery hue.

Ground collapsing  
suddenly hardening  
as sand engulfs  
toes and water tickles.

Smell of humid  
waters wafting  
wind and the jungle  
edge turns black

as mist swallows it whole.

2008

## UPPER WEST END TOWNHOMES 2005



The project is within the West End district which has recently been redeveloped. The popularity of this area is due to the proximity to downtown and Memorial Park, Houston's premier green space. Upper West End consists of approximately 200 townhouses in four phases. The overall design strategy was to implement a neighborhood cohesion and create townhouses (1400–1850 S.F.) with open spaces. The neighborhood cohesion was achieved with color and sidewalks. A palette of four colors was chosen and repeated throughout the development assigning a color to each townhouse.

# UPPER WEST END TOWNHOMES





## GAMBUDOS

I saw a tree today  
it is called terciopelo  
it appeared in the distance  
its roots tall as I  
like a series of mountains folding  
behind each other  
in the mist  
fanning out  
razor thin covered in moss  
bright green in the darkness  
of the jungle floor  
terracing the slope  
and walking past the caves  
they leave  
I ask Taracio  
gambusos these roots are  
and he replies gambudos.

2007

## CITY PROMENADE TOWNHOMES 2004



The main design strategy is to create a great, livable community in Midtown. The driveway is wider than usual. This allows for trees to be planted down the middle of the driveway. The trees and pavers on the drive create an attractive place where residents feel happy and have places to congregate. The decision was also made to clad the driveway façades with stucco and the street façade with Hardiplank to give residents the colorful appeal when they drive into the community. The development is gated with only two main entries to give neighbors a sense of security.

# CITY PROMENADE TOWNHOMES







## EL SALVADOR WHEN I WAS LITTLE

Romero was overthrown  
and I was just  
a little kid.  
After that, bombs  
every night,  
shootings on my front yard.  
Some friends and I once blocked  
my window with a cushion  
to stop the bullets.  
My neighbor, the Swiss ambassador,  
who used to chase  
us off the tree where we were spying  
on him, was assassinated  
in his car at Plazalegre,  
where I used  
to play pinball every Sunday. But  
I was just  
a kid.  
What was the left  
and what was the right?  
I heard  
a lot of them.  
Was one the militia  
or the people who killed  
the archbishop?  
Or was one simply right  
and one wrong?  
My dad's friend,  
she was burned  
by a bullet  
on her back.  
I was just  
a little kid.  
El Salvador had  
green fresh  
lettuce, very good  
coffee, peace.

1985

## YUPON HOUSE 2002



The extreme rectangular shape is derived from the massing of the project. The front of the house participates in the urban theater of narrow streets and sidewalks, while the rear integrates into the layout of the city block with smaller courtyards for each house. The long side of the house faces a large park. The first floor is one large space with exposed beams that support the second floor. The rhythm of the structural beams above reflect the different spatial functions below. Because the front of the house faces west with an open expanse to the large park, the afternoon sun pierces through to the house. Sun control for the western wall is achieved with hot-dipped galvanized perforated metal panels. The panels are lantern-like when lit at night.

# YUPON HOUSE





## AQUA BLUE DOTS

Aqua blue dots  
are painted  
everywhere  
these days,  
on the walls,  
in the office,  
in the classroom,  
in the kitchen  
and bathroom,  
on department stores  
in the malls, on  
the malls themselves,  
on the McDonald's  
arches. Mobil's  
sign had an aqua ble dot  
right on the o.

On the stop  
light the green  
was aqua  
blue tonight.  
On Congress  
and Cain,  
on Lyons  
and Glades,  
these aqua blue dots  
are everywhere these days.

1990

## FAIRVIEW TOWNHOMES 2002



This twin townhouse project is set back from the street by means of an exterior deck above the garage. The deck, an extension of the living room, buffers the living space from the busy street. The third floor balcony and study cantilever over the deck and provide shade for the large living room windows. The interior spaces are organized around a split-entry; that is, the public entrance off the street is into a space that is in between the first and second floor, bypassing the bedrooms on the first floor. The second floor is completely open with kitchen, dining, and living rooms together. The study on the third floor overlooks the living room below. Complementary colors were used for the façade composition.

# FAIRVIEW TOWNHOMES







they bombed the water supply  
they bombed the electric plant  
they bombed the telephone lines  
three nights  
no communication  
no nothing  
the day before I scraped my knee badly  
I was raw in pain  
no water to run on it  
the redness glared in the candle light

1994

## LAS CICADAS TOWNHOMES 2000



The second floor entertainment space in the 2400 sq.ft. homes is dramatic with fine detailing and an atrium staircase that overlooks the main entry. The second floor integrates the kitchen and living and dining room on one floor where the spaces flow into each other. The dining room is partially enclosed so that it can function as a separate room. The exterior composition of stucco and metal volumes complements the urban setting of the eight-townhouse development.

# LAS CICADAS TOWNHOMES





the ice cream rang its bell  
I went to the street  
tri tri tri tri tri  
ta ta ta ta ta  
ayyy! ayy!  
ahi estan!  
school kids in uniform  
ran down the street  
the ice cream man left his cart  
I ran back inside

1994

## YUPON PLACE TOWNHOMES 2000



One of the challenges our company faced in designing and building these town houses was working within the new City Development Ordinance. The new garage setbacks led us to provide a striking design in which the garages are not the prominent feature. For these 2800 sq. ft. townhouses we wanted to develop a new form, with a vibrant, innovative look.

YUPON PLACE TOWNHOMES







#### A WAITING ROOM: SOUTH STATION

The small black hand strikes  
three, two hours away from my journey  
as I sit on the big dirty wooden bench  
in the cold, cold  
room.

I grab my plastic bag tightly,  
a voice is heard  
though the microphone,  
noises echo,  
the room fills  
and lines and lines  
of people form.

When the lines are gone,  
I sit on the bench  
trying hard not to move  
as a drunkard hollers  
and hollers  
at his crazy wife.  
Three detectives emerge  
with their silver badges.  
The drunkard and wife are gone.

I see the hand on four.  
I rise.  
Walking across the dirty floor  
I kick a crushed Marlboro pack  
and a Coke can.  
I hear another voice.  
I am called to my train,  
finally.

1985

## EL REFUGIO HOUSE 2000



This vacation home is set on the edge of the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge near the Caribbean Coast of Costa Rica. The unique setting created an unusual development environment. The design and construction of the home had to meet the very strict development codes for the Refuge. Set on top of a hill with partial views of the sea, the house is constructed amidst the trees to preserve the jungle that surrounds it.

# EL REFUGIO HOUSE





**WITHOUT**

without  
boundaries visible  
from the sky  
I know I am here  
the land dry, dry

oh volcanoes smoking  
stained by lava  
carved farmland  
at your base  
standing alone  
like your country  
oh Nicaragua

2005

## HAWTHORNE HOUSE 1997



“Parra’s clean contemporary interior architecture pays homage to arts and crafts styling...” writes Ms. Madeleine McDermott Hamm about this house in the 1997 Houston Chronicle article titled “Texas style fits well in Montrose”. Our goal for this 4000 sq.ft. residence was to create a style that would stand out yet not intrude into the neighborhood.

HAWTHORNE HOUSE







## LETTERS OF REFERENCE



**BAYLOR  
COLLEGE OF  
MEDICINE**

Juan Botas, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of Molecular and  
Human Genetics  
One Baylor Plaza  
Houston, Texas 77030  
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February 8, 2008

**RE: Ben Brewer Young Architect of the Year Award 2008**

Dear members of the selection committee:

I am writing to recommend and support in the strongest possible terms Mr. Camilo Parra's nomination for the prestigious Ben Brewer Young Architect of the Year Award. As a faculty member at Baylor College of Medicine I am often asked to write reference letters, and it is quite rare that I write a recommendation with such pleasure and enthusiasm as I write this one.

I know Camilo Parra well because I purchased one of the "Las Cicadas" townhouses that he built in the year 2000. After seeing very many townhouses that seemed all made at same factory line, I was immediately attracted to the modern design and open spaces of Mr. Parra's work at Las Cicadas. Camilo was also very helpful with the finish and customization of my house. In addition, I have always been extraordinarily pleased with his professionalism and the care he takes in the relationships with his clients. This was best demonstrated during subsequent years as Camilo made himself available many times for consultation or to answer questions that I, or my neighbors, had about our beautiful townhouses.

This extended relationship has given me the opportunity to know Camilo better, and I have had the opportunity to visit his new developments and talk with him about his professional perspectives. In this regard it became clear to me that Camilo is very sensitive to the communities he is developing. During these years I have also been impressed with Camilo commitment to educate the public about design and architecture, and with the pride he takes in his volunteer work in the community. In summary, I could not think of a better candidate for the award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JB", written over a horizontal line.

Juan Botas, PhD.

# KRE&S

KAREN ROSE ENGINEERING & SURVEYING

February 12, 2008

To Whom It May Concern

Reference: Camilo Parra

Ladies and Gentlemen:

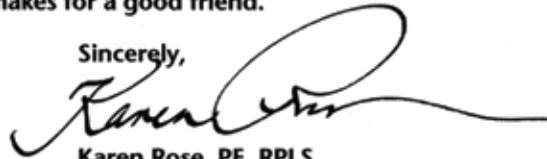
It is with great pleasure that I undertake this reference for Camilo Parra. Having worked closely with Camilo, starting with one of his first Houston townhouse projects in 1999, I have been able to observe him create a firm that, on the one hand wins awards for design excellence and on the other contracts the construction. I have not often encountered a professional that supervises the entire building process.

Camilo Parra and Parra Design Group have done what Houston needs. They have produced a residential product that is affordable to a large sector of the first-time buyer market and at the same time is intelligently conceived, aesthetically pleasing and well constructed. The firm has transformed an entire neighborhood in the Upper West End. From an area where drug dealers blatantly sold their wears on street corners in to a haven of sprightly colored new residences. I am proud to have been part of this effort.

I think it pertinent to include a few of my observations of Camilo as a teacher. Having juried one of his class's design projects, I was able to see him interact with his students. He encourages his students to approach their projects with a fresh and independent mindset. What would have appeared to be completely off-the-wall ideas were not discouraged; instead the students were motivated to funnel these ideas into practical solutions.

In closing, I would like to make a few remarks on a personal level. Over the years we have enjoyed comparing notes on books, movies and what we read in the media; dishing the political and social lights of the day and even trading Thanksgiving recipes. I am not sure if this makes for the young architect of the year; but it certainly makes for a good friend.

Sincerely,



Karen Rose, PE, RPLS

2130 Welch Avenue Houston, Texas 77019  
(713) 522-1197  
Fax: (713) 522-5210



February 12, 2008

**A I A. Houston.**

**Ben Brewer Young Architect of the Year**

As a business and civic leader in Houston, I am honored to recommend the candidacy of Camilo Parra for this 2008 award.

As a Hispanic and member of the Board of Directors of the Greater Houston Partnership and former President of the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, I recognize Camilo Parra as one of our young Hispanic leaders to whom both young and small business entrepreneurs look up to as a role model of hard work and success.

I have known Camilo Parra and his family for many years. He truly deserves this recognition for his professional and community leadership.

Sincerely,

**George Donnelly S.  
Board Member**



Camilo Parra  
Parra Design Group, Ltd.  
610 B West Alabama  
Houston, Texas 77006

February 15, 2008

To Whom It May Concern,

I know Camilo through involvement in our daughters' soccer league. He and I have been coaching together for several years, and I feel as though I know him well on a personal level. Although I have only just been recently introduced to some of his professional achievements, I have a great respect for his community involvement. From what I have witnessed, Camilo has a passion for soccer, is an active and committed parent, and loves teaching children. Those attributes are reflected in his devotion as a coach, and both the girls, and their parents feel his commitment. Outside soccer, I know Camilo is an active son, parent, husband, community volunteer, architect and developer, which makes his devotion to the West University Soccer Program even more notable.

In my sophomore year as an undergraduate, I took a course by John R. Stilgoe, a well-known architectural historian. During that semester, I discovered a new way to see man's impact on our environment through design, building and community development. Stilgoe's observations and teachings had a lasting impact on me. I went on to concentrate in Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard, and I still have a huge appreciation on how builders and designers can influence people's every day lives.

When I saw several of Camilo's townhouse projects, I saw the same attention to detail, commitment to quality, and expressiveness I find on the soccer field. And just as Stilgoe had shown how builders, more than professional designers, shape the landscape and our lives; Camilo and his firm make an impact on the every day experience of many Houston residents. Neat, colorful, modular living spaces stand out in mixed neighborhoods and invite outsiders to help shape and energize developing areas of Houston. I'm not qualified to comment on Camilo's achievements as an architect, but as a resident of the city, I applaud his work.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Ereli".

Michael Ereli  
President & CEO, Supply Chain Connect



# PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas A&M University System

February 12, 2008

Camilo Parra, AIA, Nomination for Ben Brewer Young Architect Award

**To Whom It May Concern:**

Please accept this nomination of Camilo Parra, AIA, for the "AIA Houston Chapter 2008 Ben Brewer Young Architect of the Year Award." For the past two years Mr. Parra has taught our 4<sup>th</sup> year design studio here at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU). Since he started teaching the class, he raised the design creativity and curiosity among the students to a hire level. The students are benefiting tremendously from his talent.

As a Dean, when I reached out to the architectural community in Houston to bring a fresh perspective to the classroom, the name of young architect Camilo Parra was raised by several established architects. Despite his busy practice, he accepted the adjunct position to contribute to the education of our students. In addition to teaching a design studio, Mr. Parra is working with his students on a service learning project with community leaders in the 1960 North West Corridor of Houston. In working with them on this project, he is instilling in them the spirit of leadership and service to their community at a young age that will grow with them. Camilo is also representing our faculty for the Michael G. Meyers High School Competition.

As a member of our faculty Camilo brings a high level of energy and unique passion for the profession of architecture. He has drawn on his work as the founder of Parra Design Group, Ltd, a design and development company, to bring real life projects to his students. He is also very skilled at making his lectures relevant to experiences that his students will encounter in their careers. As a member of the Houston Minority Business Council and the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Camilo serves as an outstanding role model for the students at our historically black University, particularly as we see our program growing with increased enrollment of Hispanic students. As of December 2006, of the 80,000 AIA members, only 2% are Latino and 1% is Black.

Camilo is well known among the faculty for involving numerous practitioners from the Houston community to serve as jurors for his classes. Most importantly, he has earned the respect of his fellow instructors for challenging and inspiring his students to achieve more each semester.

As the PVAMU Liaison on the AIA Houston Board, I came to know Camilo observing his role as a member and his leadership as a Director. As an Alumnus of Rice University, I have also known of his leadership at the Rice Design Alliance. In both regards I have found him to be a very special, creative, and talented person who would be worthy of receiving this honor.

As a result of his work here at Prairie View A&M University, his service to Houston architecture students and interns, his service to the architecture community through his involvement in the AIA, the RDA, the USGBC, and many other committees and affiliations, and his work to increase public awareness of architecture in general, it is my judgment that Camilo Parra should be named the 2008 honoree for the Young Architect of the Year award.

If I can provide any other information concerning this young Architect, please feel free to call me at 936-261-9810. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ikhlas Sabouni, Dean  
ACSA Distinguished Professor, TAMUS Regents' Professor

[www.pvamu.edu](http://www.pvamu.edu)

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email rda@rice.edu

February 29, 2008

AIA Houston  
315 Capitol, Suite 120  
Houston, TX 77002

RiceDesignAlliance

RE: 2008 Ben Brewer Young Architect Award

**Jury Members of the Ben Brewer Young Architect Awards Program:**

I am pleased to support Camilo Parra as the recipient of the AIA Houston Ben Brewer Young Architect Award. Through his involvement as both volunteer and board member of the Rice Design Alliance, Camilo has made a significant contribution to the profession and to the community through his participation in and leadership of RDA programs.

Camilo has been involved in RDA activities for several years. Upon joining the RDA board in June 2005, Camilo was asked to lead the RDA Partners, RDA's young professional group. As its chair he was also asked to serve on the Executive Board and continues to do so today. Last year under Camilo's leadership, the RDA Partners Charrette challenged architects to propose a design to unite the north and south parts of Memorial Park, Houston's largest urban park, via a pedestrian bridge. The competition, co-sponsored by the Memorial Park Conservancy and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, attracted a large number of participants. The winning design by Clark Condon and Associates was very well received and the Memorial Park Conservancy board is raising the money to build the selected design.

Camilo has also been very active on the RDA Program Committee, helping to organize the highly successful 2008 RDA spring lecture series, 30N 60S: Latin American Architecture Revisited, which brought architects from Argentina, Chile, and Columbia, as well as Teddy Cruz who works in Tijuana, Mexico from his studio in San Diego. In addition, Camilo has provided significant support to the RDA/AIA \$99K House Design Competition that recently produced five finalists who will compete for the winning design that will be built on a lot in Houston's Fifth Ward donated by the City of Houston. Camilo's expertise in home building was invaluable to the committee.

Camilo serves as an excellent bridge between AIA Houston and the Rice Design Alliance, and he strongly supports both organizations. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of recognition by his or her professional society.

Sincerely,

  
Linda Sylvan  
Executive Director

[www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

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## ARTICLES

### **YAF AND COF Go On THE AIR...DIGITALLY** **BY CAMILO PARRA, AIA**

Last month the Young Architects Forum launched the 150 at 150 Project, which interviews 150 Fellows on podcasts available on AIA Podnet, Soloso and iTunes. Coinciding with YAF's fifteenth anniversary and AIA's 150th anniversary, the project came out of a brainstorming session by members of the Young Architects Forum at their 15th Anniversary Summit preceding the Grassroots Leadership & Legislative Conference.

During the Summit, the members recognized that their key issue is mentorship. "The energy after the Summit was fantastic. While we were sitting around a large table in the grand assembly room, we hatched this plan as something that would mark us as techsavvy practitioners and highlight mentoring for future emerging professionals. The fun has been watching this project all come together," explains Emily Grandstaff-Rice, AIA, an associate at Cambridge Seven Associates and a member of the YAF Advisory Committee.

The interviews are open to any fellows that are interested, and will continue until the YAF collects all 150. The fellows are asked the following three questions that were formulated during a panel discussion led by Ava Abramowitz, Esq., facilitator at the Summit: How did you become you? Who was your mentor? What was your greatest Challenge? "We loved the simplicity and open-ended nature of the questions," says Grandstaff-Rice, who has spearheaded the project along with other members of the YAF Advisory Committee including Michael Meehan, AIA, Christopher Kelley, AIA, and Kristine Royal, AIA, as well as Suzanna Wight, AIA Managing Director of Alliances and Virginia Ebbert, eKnowledge Project Manager, and with great support from the College of Fellows.

The interviews have been fun for the YAF Committee, and the fellows have been candid in their responses. The Committee has had to learn audio production, web syndication, and how to create professional sounding broadcasts. "On our initial, shoe-string budget we have obtained digital recorders and are editing our own work. There is a lot of time spent on making sure the fellows are not only heard but sound great," explains Grandstaff-Rice, "We care a lot about the quality of this project." And indeed the podcasts sound like an NPR broadcast with a trendy intro music piece and closing statement encouraging listeners to learn more at [www.aia.org/podcasts](http://www.aia.org/podcasts).

With the 150 at 150 Project, the Young Architects Forum is talking about mentoring, giving a voice to its members, and advising emerging professionals. "We went into this wanting to show how mentors shape careers. It is proof the saying that every successful person has a mentor is really true," proclaims Grandstaff-Rice, "What we did not anticipate was our strengthened connection between YAF and the College of Fellows. What started as gathering information about mentoring in architecture has morphed into an oral history and archiving project for the Institute showing that both generations can learn a lot from each other."

AIA Young Architects Forum Journal Connection | January/February 2008

## ARTICLES

### **GOD AND THE OPERABLE WINDOWS** **BY CAMILO PARRA, AIA**

When I arrived they were standing together, daughter, mother, and father, as if ready for their picture to be taken but not smiling. In the background was an empty lot surrounded by ditches and beside the lot was an old home. Immediately the notion entered my mind that they did not like the area because they looked unhappy. First impressions can kill you in the real estate market.

After we introduced each other, I gave them a tour of three different townhouse models we were building. Then the father said, “You are God sent. I did not think we could find it but we did. We have seen every townhouse in Houston, and I told her one did not exist in which all the bathrooms had windows that open.” The mother was finally smiling and I knew I had just sold a townhouse. “Thank you, now we can stop looking,” the father said.

In this instance, being an architect who believes in operable windows for the bathrooms was critical. I have been developing townhouses in Houston for six years, and customer feedback is very important. Despite all the feedback, it is still difficult to surmise exactly what a homebuyer wants or what the magic formula is.

I recently gave up flat walls for textured drywall. For years, no texture was important to me—the clean wall, the modern look. But customers were actually asking for texture. They did not like the blemishes in the drywall. At an open house one Sunday, a realtor brought some clients to a townhouse where we had installed a corner fireplace. The fireplace was attractive in the middle of the white drywall. The realtor went straight to a blemish above the fireplace and said, “These finishes are awful. Let’s go.”

There appears to be a standard townhouse program in Houston. The program is influenced by the dimensions of the two-car garage and density requirements that allow for three units per lot. Simply put, the standard townhouse consists of the garage and one bedroom on the first floor; living, dining, and kitchen areas on the second floor; and master bedroom with second bedroom on the third floor. The overall area is determined by the price point.

The price point is the single most determining factor in whether a potential homebuyer will buy. So regardless of what the finishes are, what the design is, and where the utility room is, the price rules. Location and price go hand in hand. Good design, however, can also sell.

Camilo Parra, AIA, is principal of Parra Design Group Ltd. in Houston.  
AIA Small Project Practitioners Journal | October 2005



## ARTICLES

### **WATER DOCTOR** **BY CAMILO PARRA, AIA**

It was a lazy Sunday morning, cloudy and cold from a strong northern storm that had passed through the night before. My friends called me in angst: they were remodeling a room and noticed a huge puddle of water right in the middle of it. Yet there was no evidence that the water was coming from the ceiling.

I went to my friends' house to find and inspect the problem for them. It turns out the room had a north-facing window with an exterior sill that did not slope outwards, thus allowing the water to re-enter the room through the wall cavity.

Because I live in Houston, it is not uncommon for me to receive many calls from friends and clients about water problems. The main sources of these problems that I have encountered are windows, roof and wall penetrations, and balconies.

In one instance, I performed a leak test (using a hose and spraying it) on a window, only to find that the screen was on too tight and was not letting the water out. Fortunately, placing peel and seal (window wrap) around the window nailing-fin against the exterior sheathing is a great moisture barrier and has, since its advent, reduced many such problems.

In another bizarre case, water was entering through a dryer vent in a wall and traveling along the vent pipe in the ceiling to finally spill about 30 feet away from the penetration. Caulking around the vent cover with silicone solved that problem.

Balconies potentially create two distinct water problems. One problem is leaks through the balcony water barrier and another is water stains around the exterior balcony skirt. Placing the balcony outside the interior envelope by cantilevering it can minimize the first problem.

There are many different ways to waterproof the balcony floor, and one barrier that I have begun to use recently is fiberglass. I think it is effective because it is hard and will not succumb to nails and other debris that are unavoidably dropped during construction.

The second problem is an aesthetic one and is often seen in balconies. It is most common to have water flow beyond the balcony edge. However, this method exposes the flooring edge, usually tile, and also produces unappealing white stains around the balcony.

A detail that we have begun to use recently (above) is to have the water drain internally through the balcony in a gutter and have the edge of the balcony come above the gutter so that it hides the finished floor of the balcony. Also, rather than tile, we are showing a wood composite deck installed in panels. This method allows the panels to be removed to repair the moisture barriers as necessary.

The caveat is to make sure the high point of the gutter is flashed properly beneath the exterior sheathing. Or else the water will leak through the balcony ceiling below.

AIA Small Project Forum Journal | Number 24 \* April 2002

Photographs by Hester + Hardaway

