

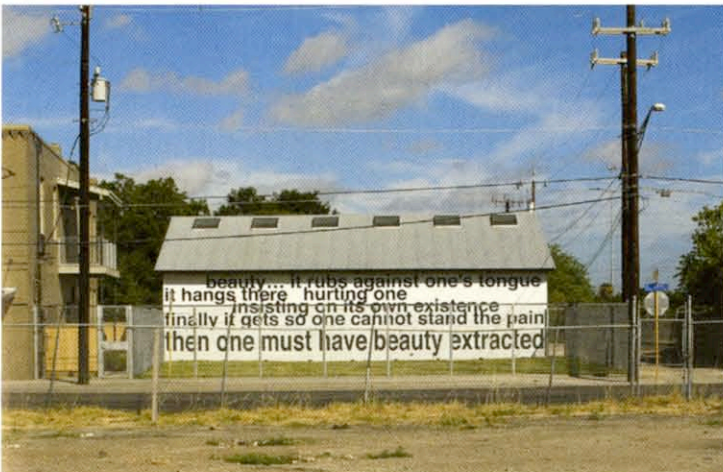
# small office

By Linda Burnett  
Photography by Chris Cooper

**project/client:** Linda Pace Foundation

**location:** San Antonio, Texas

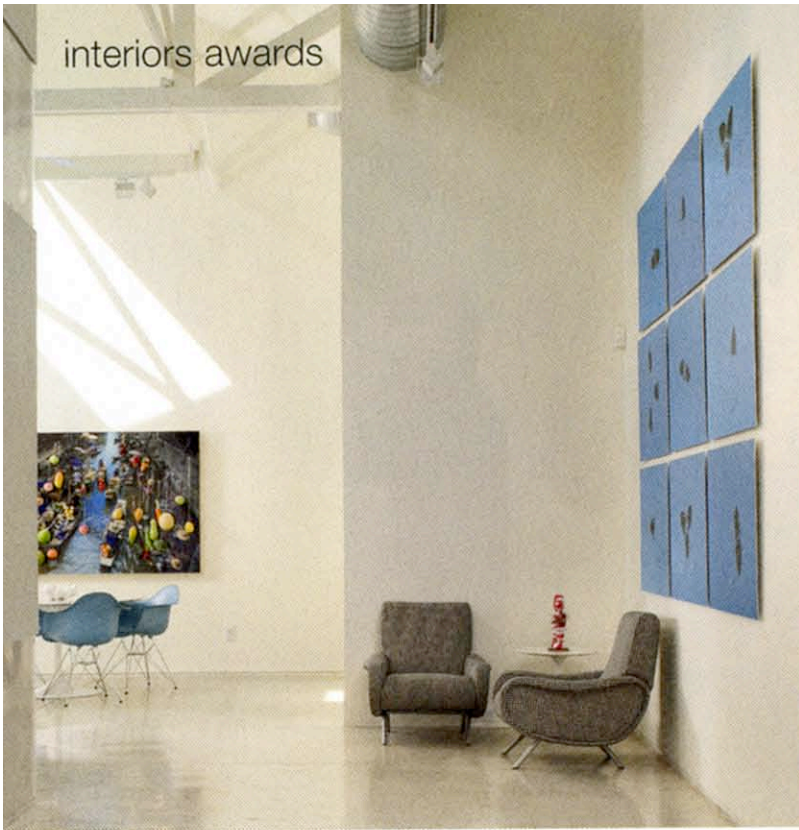
**designer:** Poteet Architects



When Jim Poteet of Poteet Architects converted a dilapidated auto body shop into an artist's studio in downtown San Antonio, Texas, he had no idea he later would transform the space again. Six months after construction's completion, his long-time client Linda Pace, a well-known art collector, philanthropist, and artist in her own right, passed away from breast cancer. Her vision wasn't mined in vain; the nonprofit Linda Pace Foundation now uses her studio as its home. Four offices and a conference room display her rotating art collection; serve her art residency program, Artpace; maintain the adjacent park, Chrispark (named for her deceased son); and support contemporary art and artists through acquisitions. The space's second iteration retains the original pure, open space that she desired. Pace wanted "an exciting, vibrant place in which to work and be stimulating on a daily basis," explains Rick Moore, president of the Linda Pace Foundation, whose doors opened in early 2008.

With only three months for completion, Poteet, no stranger to redevelopment projects, wrangled with the existing building's 2,500-sq.-ft. structure, while creating a museum-quality display for large pieces of art. Poteet pulled the private, open-topped spaces to the center, leaving the perimeter for the gallery and ample natural light. "Linda was a fanatic about natural light," he says, when explaining the six huge skylights, polycarbonate translucent wall panels, and trusses that cast shadows that animate the interiors into a breathing sculptural form. "And we wanted the volume to remain—almost stubbornly."

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“We created a treasure box to show off art to the best effect,” says Poteet. “This was different from other rehab conversions. It had to be a backseat to the art itself. It’s not easy to pull off that subtractive approach. You have to treat the design so you don’t see it.” Even the exterior—“the Monopoly-house quality of it,” he says—refrains from calling attention to itself, not withstanding the oversized poem about beauty scrawled on its side.

Moore adds, “The aesthetic of the conversion needed to be consistent with Linda’s aesthetic,” which by all accounts it is. The considerable burnt orange doors designed by Jorge Pardo and installed at the entrance to the conference room were even acquired from Pace’s own loft (also designed by Poteet). Ultimately, the office/gallery is as much a place to work and exhibit artwork as it is a celebration of life and the contemporary artist. 📍

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“This is probably one of the most humble projects that we reviewed, and yet the clarity and sensuality reaches far beyond any other. The façade engages the community, and the interior speaks to the quality of the institution. From the plain-spoken exterior to the nutty Pardo doors, this office expresses in a few clever moves all it needs to give it character and wit. It is in turns elegant and funny, plain and idiosyncratic, high and low.”

