



Attention Getter

LINDA PACE COMMISSIONED LONDON-BASED ARCHITECT DAVID ADJAYE TO DESIGN HER FOUNDATION'S "RUBY CITY" IN ORDER TO RAISE SAN ANTONIO'S PROFILE IN THE WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL CELEBRITY.

by Patrick Michels

Project Linda Pace Gallery

Client Linda Pace Foundation

Architects Adjaye Associates, design architect;
Alamo Architects, architect of record.



Linda Pace was a woman who listened to her dreams: It was a vision of a multicolored snake biting her on the ear that inspired the hot sauce heiress to leave her family business behind for a new life of art creation and patronage. And when, in 2007, she awoke from a dream of a ruby city, she knew she'd found the form for the museum to showcase her collection.

Pace died later that year, but not before she found a kindred spirit in David Adjaye, the star London-based architect commissioned by her foundation to make the dream a reality. For years, Pace, through her Artpace residency program, drew international artists to work in San Antonio. When it came time to design Ruby City, her selection of Adjaye was in keeping with that tradition.

"Linda was a proud Texan and loved San Antonio, and she was interested in bringing to San Antonio a really significant architectural building," says Kathryn Kanjo, a Linda Pace Foundation board member. "I think the ambitions were to shine a light on San Antonio by bringing an unexpected type of building to our skyline." San Antonio has Emilio Ambasz's botanical garden and Ricardo Legoretta's public library, Kanjo notes, "but otherwise it's not a city that has a cluster of international architects. It's not known for that. What Linda wanted to bring to San Antonio is this excellence."

Adjaye, who was introduced to Pace by the London video artist Isaac Julien, seems a sure bet to deliver. In the years since he began work on Ruby City, his star has risen even higher, with signature projects around the world including the grand National Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., and the scene-shattering Moscow School of Management.

The \$14 million project won't command a great promenade or stand amid San Antonio's downtown towers, but the bright edifices of the

14,000-sf museum will give a jolt to any unsuspecting visitor who turns the corner in this quiet neighborhood. Its first story leaves a small footprint on what today is an empty field between the foundation's headquarters and San Pedro Creek. The second story juts out, floating above the field and offering a lookout over the waterway. With its deep red tones and sharp angles, renderings of the museum recall a faceted jewel appropriate to its name, but its materials — "precast concrete with glass aggregate," according to the designers — lend it a rougher, more organic texture even as its surface shimmers.

"That we're doing the building now might seem kind of a long time after Linda's passing," says Kanjo, "but this delay is about the economy. Linda was absolutely involved in this design and the development of the program."

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Kanjo says the interior spaces demanded ongoing conversations between the foundation and Adjaye, to ensure the proper flow between the gallery spaces. The shape and ambient light, she says, will vary from one small room to the next, in keeping with Pace's sensibility. "She wanted people to think it was a contemplative space and not too institutional," says





Facing *The building's small footprint leaves room for visitors to stroll around and take in its bright exterior.*

Above *Ruby City will open onto a revitalized San Pedro Creek, anchoring a long network of creekside parks and trails.*

Kanjo. The building's profile and its exterior, however, came entirely from Adjaye and his response to the surroundings.

"David got what Linda wanted," Kanjo says. "He works with the terrain and the cues of geology and the landscape."

From the beginning, for instance, Adjaye's design oriented Ruby City to face the San Pedro Creek — a bold decision, given the state of the waterway, which is typically shallow or dry with weedy, trash-strewn banks. "Adjaye was very focused right at the beginning on the creek," says Irby Hightower, FAIA, founding principal at Alamo Architects, the project's executive architect. "He was always focused on making that connection."

In the years since the project's inception, San Antonio officials and civic supporters have devised a plan to re-imagine the creek as a winding urban park — an affirmation of the potential Adjaye saw when he pointed his museum toward the water, and a perfect vantage point from which dog-walkers and joggers can appreciate San Antonio's latest architectural gem.

Hightower says Ruby City is the first project for which Alamo has served as architect of record, a job the firm took because of its long relationship with the Pace Foundation. While the job has been mainly logistical — navigating City Hall and recommending materials suited to the local craftsmen — Hightower says the journey has been an inspirational one. "It's really fun," says Hightower. "It's certainly doing a building in a way that we wouldn't normally, so it's great to see somebody else's process."

"I don't know of any other building designed like this in San Antonio, so it's going to be interesting to see how people react," says Hightower. But he's betting on a warm reception. "I think it's going to be extremely well-received. It's red and it glitters — why would you not like that?"