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BEST PRACTICES



LEONG LEONG

Dominic and Christopher Leong operate in that sweet spot between experimentation and commercial contracts – a formula that is earning international attention *By Tim McKeough*

Location

New York and Los Angeles

Established

2009

Awards

2013 MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program finalist

2010 AIA New Practices New York

2007 Architectural League Prize (Dominic Leong)

Projects

Current Los Angeles LGBT Center, McCadden campus, Los Angeles (2018)

Current Au Pont Rouge department store, St. Petersburg, Russia (2015)

Current Private residence, Millbrook, New York (2016)

2015 Miami Design District city garage, Miami

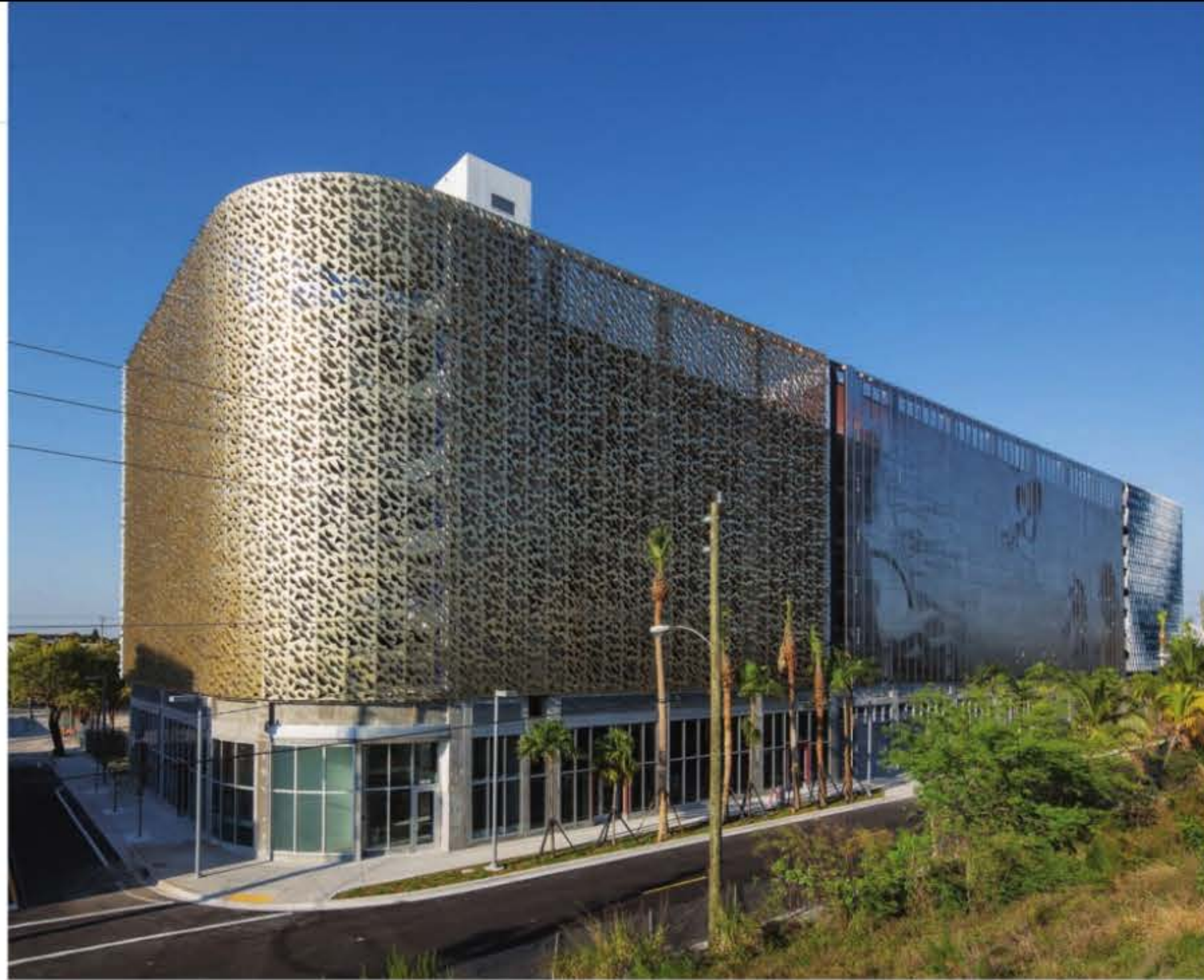
2014 Master of arts in curatorial practice program facility, School of Visual Arts, New York

2014 OfficeUS, Venice Biennale U.S. pavilion

2012 3.1 Phillip Lim headquarters, New York

2009 3.1 Phillip Lim, Seoul

leong-leong.com



MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT CITY GARAGE, 2015
 ← ↑ Folded fin cut-outs in panels of gold titanium-coated steel create an attractive aesthetic on the exterior while diffusing the sunlight that streams in.
 ← The unique project merges three distinct facades, with Leong Leong's contribution on one end and San Francisco firm IwamotoScott's on the other. The work of artist John Baldessari adorns the centre panel.



3.1 PHILLIP LIM, SEOUL, 2009
 The firm's first project for the American fashion house is a bold geometric exterior clad in white concrete tiles. The exploration of texture and light continues inside, with brass spikes interspersed along the white surfaces.



TURNING PINK, NEW YORK, 2010
 Leong Leong's practice includes art installations. At Chinatown's W/ Project Space last year, the firm stacked rigid pink insulation to create a multi-dimensional cave within the gallery.

BEST PRACTICES

BACKSTORY

At Leong Leong, architecture runs in the family. Christopher and Dominic are following in the footsteps of their father, Wayne (an architect based in St. Helena, California), with whom they still sometimes collaborate. Although both brothers studied architecture, they initially chose separate paths. Christopher, 38, earned his degree at Princeton University, then took a job with SHoP Architects in New York; Dominic, two years younger, studied at Columbia University in New York, and worked for Bernard Tschumi before co-founding the PARA Project architecture office, also in New York.

In 2009, when American fashion house 3.1 Phillip Lim approached Dominic about a range of projects, it seemed like the ideal time for a family reunion. "Christopher and I always imagined working together," says Dominic, who had impressed the label with the design of the company's Los Angeles boutique while with his former firm. "3.1 Phillip Lim was expanding at the time. It was opportune timing." Leong Leong's first job was a boutique in Seoul with a chic exterior made up of pillowy white concrete tiles. Inside, white and brass spikes protrude from the walls, while the more intimate interior volumes are lined in warm natural leather and custom wallpaper by Korean-American artist Wook Kim.

Since then, the pair has designed the brand's New York office, and they have picked up other fashion-related projects, including the Opening Ceremony boutique inside New York's Ace Hotel; and the flagship for PYE, a men's shirt brand based in Hong Kong. Over the years they have developed a keen eye for using both high and low materials in inventive applications, and slicing up spaces in unconventional ways.

TURNING POINT

Leong Leong got its start in the fashion world, but the brothers were determined to avoid being pigeonholed. "We started self-initiating projects and doing installations around the city," says Dominic, pointing to such projects as Turning Pink, where they built a cave-like inhabitable interior in a Manhattan gallery from sheets of rigid pink insulation. "For us, it's interesting to be in the realms of both commerce and pure culture," adds Christopher. "We can take the installation practice into the commercial realm and vice versa. We find a lot of territory to explore while blending those boundaries."

This conceptual approach led to their designing the U.S. pavilion for the 2014 Venice Biennale of Architecture. They obscured the Doric column entrance from end to end with mirrored vinyl blinds, giving the neoclassical structure a new personality with a product usually reserved for

office interiors. Inside, the space was a landscape of bi-level work tables topped with smoky transparent acrylic. Eight staff members from the newly formed firm OfficeUS worked at the desks for the duration of the biennale, transforming everyday architectural work into performance. At the end of each day, their tools and models were stored on a shelf beneath the tabletop, where they remained on view for visitors. "The work surface became this interface between the office and the public," says Dominic.

MATERIAL MATTERS

Leong Leong uses materials in ways that imbue them with a sense of mystery. For the facade of a parking garage in Miami's Design District, gold titanium-coated steel panels are patterned with curvilinear fins cut and folded from the metal. "We wanted to create a facade that would read at two different scales," says Christopher, referring to the perspectives from the sidewalk and the nearby highway. "When you're up close, you see shadow and depth, but from afar you see more of a pattern." Inside, the slices animate the garage with a play of light and shadow. Interestingly, the garage incorporates two other facades, one by architecture firm IwamotoScott and artist John Baldessari.

In 2014, to create a facility for the curatorial practice master's program at New York's School of Visual Arts, Leong Leong collaborated with Charles Renfro of Diller Scofidio + Renfro. The centre includes a 280-square-metre learning environment with a space in which to practise installing exhibitions. Customized mobile walls made of drywall and plywood rotate and slide on ceiling tracks, enabling it to be reconfigured with countless layouts. "The idea is that it becomes a laboratory," says Dominic. "There's a push and pull between art and space."

ON THE BOOKS

Everything from a country house in upstate New York to the accessories floor of the Au Pont Rouge department store in St. Petersburg, Russia, has been realized in the Leong Leong studio. Its largest project to date is a new 15,000-square-metre campus for the Los Angeles LGBT Center, slated to break ground next year and open in 2018.

"It's a mixed-use campus with housing for seniors and at-risk youth, emergency overnight beds, social services and arts facilities," says Christopher. "The design is based on a mosaic, with different parts fitting together," he continues, noting how the four buildings will house distinct functions, linked through intimate, pedestrian-friendly courtyards. "They connect everything," he says, "while creating buffers between zones for the many types of users." **AZ**



PAST FUTURES, PRESENT, FUTURES, NEW YORK, 2012
For this group exhibition, the Storefront for Art and Architecture's interior was transformed with metallic vertical blinds, which the firm has used in other projects. The exhibit showcased 101 unrealized proposals for the city.



OFFICEUS, VENICE BIENNALE, U.S. PAVILION, 2014
Pamphlets for 200 American firms lined the pavilion walls, while eight staff members from the new studio OfficeUS worked at semi-translucent acrylic tables. The exhibit put the day-to-day practice of architecture on display. Leong Leong's trademark mirrored vertical blinds covered the Doric column facade.



MASTER OF ARTS CURATORIAL PRACTICE PROGRAM FACILITY, SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, NEW YORK, 2014
The practice exhibition room for tomorrow's curators has walls that slide and rotate to quickly and endlessly reconfigure the size and scale of the space.

FEATURES



THE NEW OFFICE CULTURE

Behind the scenes of three stunning work environments



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EKIMETRICS Slick wooden volumes add structure to an ornate open space for a growing tech start-up. *By Amy Verner*



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TRUDEAU FOUNDATION Transparency and shared spaces energize a Montreal non-profit. *By David Theodore*



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GORES GROUP A private equity firm's refined palette and sculptural details exude elegance. *By Michael Webb*



76 **Norwegian Cool** Oslo firm Snøhetta, riding a wave of high-profile projects, is proving that its multi-faceted approach is a formula for success. *By Andrew Braithwaite*



84 **Live Work Grow** An adaptable live-work space in Halifax, designed by Susan Fitzgerald Architecture, makes the most of a narrow site. *By Steven Mannell*

BEST PRACTICES



56 **Leong Leong** This multidisciplinary firm, with offices in New York and Los Angeles, takes an artful approach to architecture. *By Tim McKeough*

SHOW REPORT



90 **The Future Looks Cozy** Contemporary forms tinged with nostalgia stood out among the latest furnishings at IMM Cologne in January. *By Diane Chan*