

# Art&Seek Q&A: Mark Leveno and Amy Wynne

By Betsy Lewis | February 26, 2009



Amy Wynne and Mark Leveno began their adulthoods in engineering and advertising, respectively. But they ultimately found a united calling as a duo in architecture. After spending time in the smog of Los Angeles, they now belong to Dallas. As the creative team behind the winning design of Make Space



for Artists: Design a Studio, the competition co-sponsored by La Reunion TX and the Dallas Museum of Art, Mark and Amy are already making a name for themselves in North Texas. Though Mark alone supplied the answers to my questions, the team dynamic never wanes. May the spirit of creative collaboration infuse the coming La Reunion Artist Residency.

Art&Seek: How is designing a space for Dallas different than designing one for Austin or Los Angeles?

Mark Leveno: Los Angeles is certainly more open to modern architecture, but there are plenty of people in Dallas interested in contemporary design. While the climate demands of Dallas make it a more challenging design environment, stylistically we don't design in a particular manner for a particular place. We respond to the design problem at hand, come up with a concept and then allow ourselves to develop that idea within the constraints of the locale. One of the reasons we moved back to Dallas - my hometown - from Los Angeles is to open a design firm and we'd like to inject some more contemporary style into the city.

A&S: How has your background in advertising and Amy's background in engineering informed your work in architecture?

M.L.: My advertising background has served us well because I understand how to make images compelling and attention grabbing. Amy has a background in engineering which informs and inspires the technical and mechanistic aspects of our projects and helps us come up with clever solutions. I switched because advertising lacked the tactility and humanity of architecture.

A&S: You and Amy just won the *Make Space for Artists: Design a Studio* competition. What considerations did you take into account about how an artist works?

M.L.: We thought about open working space, having lots of storage in order to have the right tool for every job, natural light and creating the ideal environment. We also contemplated the inspiration that can come from working in a wooded landscape and wanted to offer the artist the ability to work outside in the forest, but with all the conveniences of a studio. As we design, we created scenarios for different types of artists and how they would use the space. We considered some of the more involved artistic mediums, such as large scale sculpture and welding, as well as the fine arts. We also thought about some of our favorite artists whose workspaces we'd seen, such as [Constantin Brancusi](#) and [George Nakashima](#).

A&S: Do you have other artistic aspirations yourself, outside of architecture? (Your Web site is awesome.)

M.L.: I've already built some great furniture, and I also enjoy welding and photography. Amy is into sewing and growing tomatoes. She is also about to start a ceramics class and is looking forward to making very tiny beautiful objects.

A&S: What are the architectural strengths of North Texas? And what are the eyesores?

We are both very excited about the [Wyly Theater](#) by OMA/REX. I'm a fan of the [Campbell Center](#) buildings (the two gold glass towers along Central).

For least favorites, Amy, as a downtown worker, dislikes the endless parking lots and the use of purple at [Dart rail](#) stations (though that does not deter her from riding the train everyday).

Where can we go to experience your work, in any medium, in the physical world?

You can sit at our dinner table, which I built. Amy has hand drawings documenting a steel mill at the [Library of Congress](#). We also have another winning competition entry, the [Temporary Outdoor Gallery Space competition](#) sponsored by the [Austin Arts Alliance](#), which is expected to be constructed this year in Austin. So hopefully in the spring that will be physical!

*The Art&Seek Q&A is a weekly discussion with a person involved in the arts in North Texas. Check back next Thursday for another installment.*

