

FORDHAM PLAZA



Three letters have been cropping up with increasing frequency in the world of New York City design: WXY. A new identity for Weisz + Yoes Architecture, WXY Architecture + Urban Design is helmed by husband-and-wife team Claire Weisz and Mark Yoes, joined in 2006 by Layng Pew. Among the three principals and their employees, they have sufficiently diverse design expertise that the firm has managed to find its way into seemingly all levels of the civic design process.

Their spectrum starts large, with masterplans for sites such as Fordham Plaza and Astor Place, and then gets smaller: complete buildings like sanitation garages, houses, and restaurants; smaller kiosks and pavilions; and interior design and branding for

FORDHAM PLAZA
BRONX

A major transportation hub, Fordham Plaza serves 12 bus routes and a Metro North station, but suffers from serious design flaws, including traffic congestion and an unwelcoming station entrance. WXY devised a new masterplan for the city that proposes simplifying traffic patterns, making one street bus-only and relocating bus stops, freeing up 26 percent more public space in the process. Their plan puts that space to good use, creating a flexible plaza with an artificial lawn, bike racks, benches, and a new canopy entrance to the Metro North station featuring improved LED signage.

FAR ROCKAWAY PARK



ZIPPER BENCH

FAR ROCKAWAY PARK
QUEENS

A multipart project for Far Rockaway Park in Queens is the latest example of a recent signature theme for WXY: park buildings that bridge the gap between architecture and sculpture. "We were interested in finding a new vocabulary for waterfront beach parks," Weisz said. That vocabulary borrows shapes from, among other things, parasols, gull wings, and unfurled beach towels. In addition to a 28-acre masterplan and a comfort station, the project includes a 156-foot-long, 18-foot-high trellis that runs along the end of the boardwalk, comprising five connected stainless steel parasols that cast striated patterns on the concrete seats below.

TIMES SQUARE
VISITORS CENTER
MANHATTAN

The task of redesigning the Times Square Visitors Center hit a sweet spot for the firm, combining "popular culture, a huge number of pedestrians, and brand identity," Weisz said. WXY's mandate was to renovate a landmarked movie theater, transforming it into an anchor for Times Square where visitors could buy theater tickets and memorabilia and view the famed New Year's Eve ball. A curving reflective wall and old marquee poster cases fitted with interactive LCD displays riff on the people-watching theme.

TIMES SQUARE VISITORS CENTER



XINJIN LANDSCAPE BRIDGE

XINJIN LANDSCAPE BRIDGE
XINJIN, CHINA

New York may be their primary focus, but WXY still takes the occasional exotic excursion. Xinjin County in China awarded the grand prize to WXY's design for four landscape bridges, the first of which should be completed by June 2011. WXY's design, developed with structural engineering firm Weidlinger Associates, will be replacing an old, overcrowded pedestrian bridge over the Nanhe River. Resting on five multi-limbed supports, the new bridge consists of two intertwined red ribbons—"like a flattened double helix," Yoes said—that add interest to the crossing experience and double the bridge capacity.

ZIPPER BENCH
MANHATTAN

WXY's urban furniture system manages to be highly modular without resorting to the easy-but-dull solution of rectangular geometry. A highlight is the sinuous Zipper Bench, crafted of steel slats, tubes, and laser-cut stanchions finished with a powder coating. It can be constructed from any assortment of the gently curving segments, some flat, others flanked by a backrest; some concave, others convex. Connecting modules create smooth transitions between the different segments, allowing for highly customizable shapes well-suited to wind their way around trees in landscaped parks like Peter Minuit Plaza.