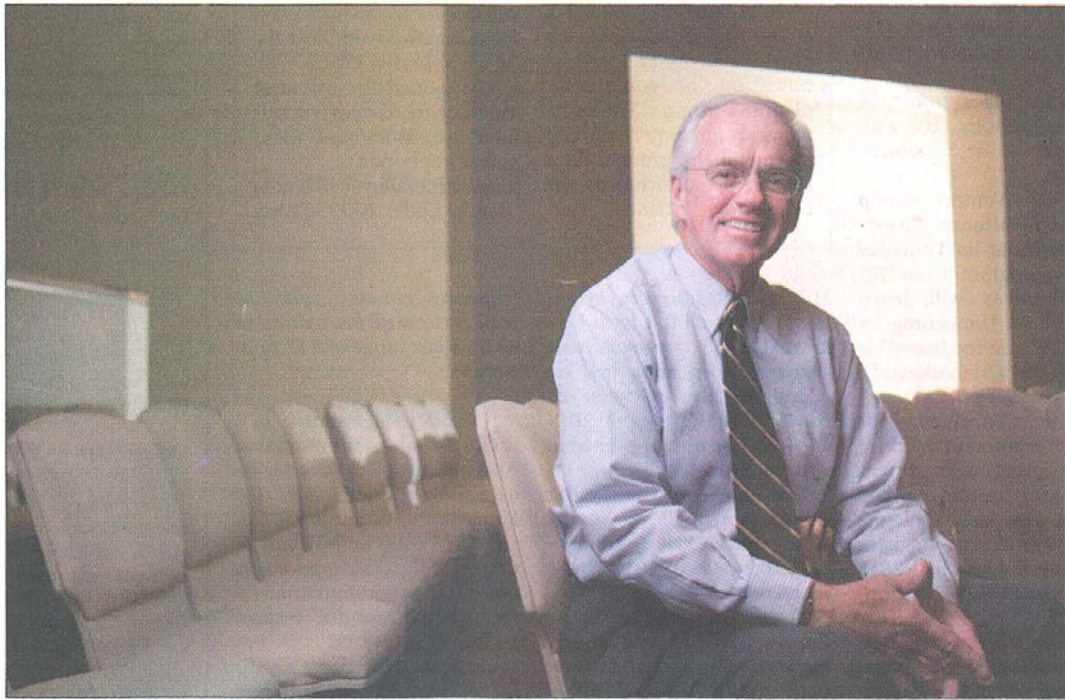


# The Daily Transcript

MARCH 23, 2009

## Close-up: Lewis Dominy



*Photo: J. Kat Woronowicz*

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## Inside



REAL ESTATE

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## Architect cements reputation with Windansea Beach homes

LA JOLLA — A collection of eight Windansea Beach homes designed by San Diego-based *Domusstudio Architecture* achieved national attention for outstanding use of concrete masonry.

Designed by firm principal, John Pyjar, AIA, in homage to Rudolf Schindler, a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, the Domusstudio work received an Award of Merit in the Residential category late last month from the National Concrete Masonry Association.

The detached Windansea Beach homes, each approximately 5,000 square feet, are on an irregular and curving 40,000-square-foot lot one-half block from the beach in La Jolla.

Sited to give each a glimpse of the ocean, the homes have three levels of living space and a finished basement with varied ceiling heights and overlooks from the levels above.

"The use of concrete masonry with horizontal reveals pays homage to the adjacent concrete beach homes built by Rudolf Schindler in 1923 in the historic district of El Pueblo Ribera Court," said Pyjar.

Domusstudio was joined in the project by *HTK Structural Engineers*, *Jayne Corporation of California*, *Modern Masonry* and *RCP Block & Brick Inc.* The owner was *Stratos Development*.

Domusstudio Architecture is a 22-year-old architectural design firm founded in 1986 as *Dominy + Associates*.

Close-up: Lewis Dominy

## Domusstudio turns divine inspiration into innovation

By MONICA UNHOLD  
*The Daily Transcript*

SAN DIEGO — Designing churches requires more than the basic foresight into functionality needed to draft blueprints for classrooms and offices. Churches require divine inspiration.

As senior principal at **Domusstudio Architecture**, Lewis Dominy pursues a variety of institutional projects.

His favorite clients are often churches because they aim to evoke an emotional response with architecture rather than meet basic facility needs, Dominy said.

"They're trying to go for something people will respond to in an emotional way," Dominy said.

As the son of a Navy chaplain and a 30-year member of the St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church in Solana Beach, Dominy draws on his religious background when designing new churches.

"I know how churches think because I'm a member," Dominy said. "I can pray with them, plan with them and understand their motivation."

Such understanding has helped Dominy forge a repu-

tation for church design since he founded **Domusstudio LLP** in 1986. The firm was formerly known as Dominy & Associates Architects.

Church architecture has evolved in recent years to include big screen TVs, soundstages and theatrical lighting, all in an effort to draw in younger members, Dominy said. Many churches are also beginning to include amenities to attract youth for after-school programs.

Dominy has helped design churches that incorporate skateboard parks, indoor basketball courts and coffee shops for mothers to congregate in while their children are in care programs, he said.

"The way people worship in Southern California has changed," Dominy said.

While some churches are holding onto traditional spires and stained glass windows in their designs, many are cutting costs by turning the interiors of barren warehouses into sanctuaries and multipurpose rooms. Such "church in a box" facilities challenge Dominy and his staff to create interesting designs despite the bland exterior.

Domusstudio has designed hundreds of churches throughout Southern California. A few of the most prominent in San Diego include Mission Valley Church of the Nazarene, Tierrasanta Seventh-Day Adventist and St. John's Episcopal Church in Chula Vista.

Other major Domusstudio projects in San Diego include the recent renovation of Copley Symphony Hall, three fire stations for the city of Encinitas, and the Bonita and Oceanside libraries.

The firm is currently involved in a competition to redesign Malibu Presbyterian Church, which was destroyed in the 2007 Corral Fire.

Domusstudio's design has been selected between the top two designs currently being considered for the rebuild of the ocean view church, Dominy said.

The architects at Domusstudio enjoy the challenges such projects present. Although churches make up more than half of the company's work, the company also dabbles in residential work.

Due to the architects' interest and desire to solve complex problems, Domusstudio has attracted an array of difficult residential projects, Dominy said.

Recently Dominy helped design a custom home to fit around three Torrey Pine trees that could not be

removed from the homeowner's lot, he said.

"Everybody comes in with some kind of challenge, some kind of problem, and we help them solve it," Dominy said.

Dominy's own home in Del Mar serves as an example of his ability to design homes in challenging locations.

"Probably what people know me for the most is the crazy house I live in," Dominy said.

The roughly 800-square-foot home is wedged on a tiny lot in Del Mar.

With its unusual shape, the "triangle house" makes use of nearly every inch the property affords. The narrowest end of the home, which contains the shower, is only three feet wide. On its broadest end, the home is just 24 feet across.

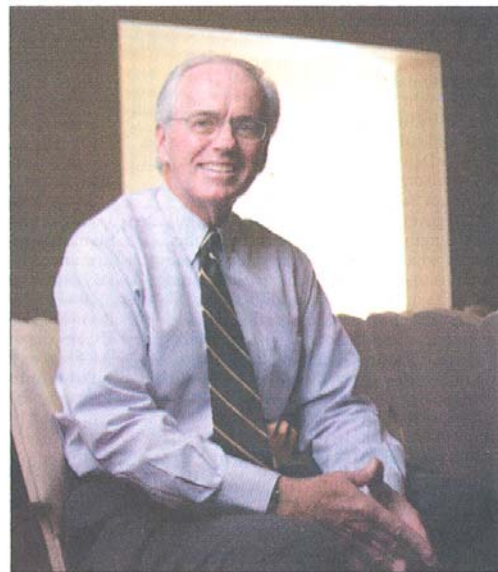
The nautical-themed house has garnered a lot of attention, and even been featured on national television shows.

Dominy takes the fame in stride and maintains a sense of humor when it comes to the wacky house he calls home.

"I got the lot real cheap," Dominy said with a grin.

Because Domusstudio's client base is comprised mostly of religious institutions, the firm has not been impacted by the recession as much as other architecture firms.

Dominy's staff of 23, including principals Wayne Holtan, John Pyjar, David Pfeifer, and associates David Keitel and Ernesto Quintanar, is not



Lewis Dominy

Photo: J. Kat Woronowicz

fearful of layoffs and plans to remain together for a long time to come.

One project currently occupying the team is the master plan for Dominy's own church. Located on a seven-acre parcel, the church built in the 1940s, St. Elizabeth has not undertaken any construction projects in 25 years.

The church plans to incorporate many of the technology elements being embraced by churches in an effort to draw younger members.

Plans for future development also include stretching out to reach neighbors at the design level.

The church is currently located toward the back of a 7-acre parcel in Solana Beach.

Dominy would like to see satellite buildings that entice people to enter from the street or nearby middle school.

"I get a chance to build my own home, so to speak," Dominy said.

monica.unhold@sddt.com  
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