



## office space as stepping stone

Buda, Texas, is home to a company known to twist and bend stone into shapes resembling ancient Mayan pyramids and old Tuscan villages.

One wouldn't know it by looking at some of these projects, but the company's headquarters are strikingly modern. The clean style is not only the owners' more natural preference; it's also a fitting reflection of the way their business works.

The Escobedo Construction offices, housed in a building that from the outside is indistinguishable from other warehouses in the area, serves as showroom and inspiration to visiting clients. The design features heavy use of Texas limestone in a light cream colour, clever use of open spaces and natural light, and, among other more traditional pieces of office furniture, a stunning pair of cream-coloured Frank Gehry chairs set against a rug in bright, warm tones.

The light-filled lobby area is open to a second level occupied by several work stations. Drawing the eye toward the path that connects both levels is a set of floating stairs projecting out of a stone wall, each step a single self-supporting slab of stone. The stairway is certainly a conversation piece, but it also exemplifies the exactitude with which the company's artisans, aided by the latest technology, are able to cut stone.

David Escobedo, who co-owns Escobedo Construction with his wife, Kathy, explains that much of his business depends on the work of skilled artisans shaping stone by hand. But the company, which also specializes in architectural and structural concrete, steel fabrication and framing and custom cabinetry, uses sophisticated 3D computer

These pages: the sophisticated style of David Escobedo, as seen in the Escobedo company's showroom and visitors' center in Buda, Texas. The most used material is quality Texas limestone in shades of pale cream. The various spaces serve to present the company's expertise in the use of natural materials and architectural products.



photos: Escobedo  
text: Sara Fernández Cendón

modelling and full-scale computer plotting, along with 2- and 3-axis CNC (computer numerical control) machines, to cut stone and wood with a great amount of precision and to maximise efficiency.

If the clean lines of this company's offices serve as fitting symbols of its lean processes, the space's innovative features, such as the floating staircase, the back of which makes an interesting statement in the adjacent conference room, or the concrete basin that graces the restroom, serve as examples of the company's curiosity and flexibility.

Escobedo Construction thrives on the exploration of new materials and new techniques, sometimes by choice and sometimes by force. A few years ago, for example, the company designed its own bridge crane system only to be able to place three massive sculptures near the top of an 86-foot observatory tower. More recently, this time driven more by a desire to innovate than by necessity, David Escobedo partnered up with MIT engineering professor John Ochsendorf to explore the use of stone as a load-bearing material. The partnership, which involves an MIT internship at Escobedo Construction, makes full use of the company's facilities and technology while allowing this family business to continue its exploration of new ways of working with traditional materials.

Through its cabinet and millwork shop, stone mill and steel fabrication spaces, Escobedo Construction handles projects from the design and management stages to fabrication and installation. As a general contracting company, Escobedo Construction self-performs most subcontracting jobs, which creates greater efficiency by allowing different trades to work in parallel.

