



A LANDMARK “GREEN” BUILDING

Hawai'i's First Titanium-Clad Building is “Green”

Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i is the first titanium-clad building in the Islands. It creates a unique landmark located on the Big Island of Hawai'i on the grounds of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. It also is a green building and has been awarded a coveted Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Architect Melvyn Choy, chairman and managing principal of M5 Architecture (formerly Durrant-Media Five), said the design is an abstraction of the Big Island's volcanic landforms. The elegant simplicity of the volcanic cones of Hualālai, Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea provides the formal genesis of the design and are used to house the Center's planetarium, lobby and restaurant. Choy chose to clad the conical building forms in the reflective element titanium to emphasize the connection between the Earth and the sky. Titanium has a non-shiny, non-sleek luster that reflects the changing coloration of the Hawaiian sky.

The building is composed of 75 percent recycled material and houses systems to control power and light consumption and provide overall environmental efficiency. The café incorporates glass walls to allow bring natural light into the space.

“Metaphorically, the Center celebrates a connection between Earth and the Universe beyond,” Choy said. “The building and land mass, with its ‘green building’ design and native Hawaiian plantings, is tied on the one hand to geology and culture, yet the titanium adds space-age luster that propels our thoughts toward future discoveries.”

Titanium is practical as well. It is extremely durable and very resistant to corrosion, especially to the acid rain that Hawai'i's volcanoes produce, and is maintenance free.

In addition, several design elements allude to a common theme in astronomy and Hawaiian heritage: the journey for knowledge of the Universe. The design also had to respond with sensitivity to the site and to the environment. Choy incorporated these design goals into a building that serves as a visual icon for the Center.

M5 Architecture design for the facility has also been recognized as 2007 New Public Project of the Year by the Hawaii chapter of National Association of Industrial and Office Properties and received a 2006 Concrete Achievement Award.