

WINTER PARK

MAGAZINE



It's All About Old Glory
by Morgan Samuel Price

PHASES & STAGES | TRIBUTE IN BRONZE | THE POEM BY BILLY COLLINS

DESIGN THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Architecture by Schenkel Shultz Pays Homage to Community, Shapes Cultural and Civic Life.

theater-inspired form—merges philanthropy and the arts into a single, welcoming destination where performances, exhibitions, nonprofit collaboration and public gatherings are invited and encouraged.

“We wanted the design of The Edyth to enhance the organization’s mission,” notes Ekta. “It is an infusion of their mission into the design that will take the foundation into the next 50 years.”

Her design leadership is equally visible in Schenkel Shultz’s new Orange Avenue headquarters—an award-winning transformation of a former commercial building into a 12,000-square-foot studio that expresses the firm’s identity through materials, craftsmanship and openness.

Defined by sculptural elements, natural light and a palette inspired by architectural tools and materials, the building positions the firm more visibly within the community it serves and reflects its commitment to design excellence. The project recently earned Ekta recognition at the inaugural Alumni Design Awards at her alma mater, the University of Florida School of Architecture.

ACCOLADES AND INVOLVEMENT

Ekta’s growing list of accolades includes New York City’s Public Design Commission Award for Excellence in Design, AIA Orlando’s Award of Honor for The Edyth and, most recently, Schenkel Shultz being named AIA Orlando’s Firm of the Year—a distinction that reflects not only the firm’s architectural contributions, but its advocacy for smarter, more resilient and thoughtful growth across the region.

Beyond her design work, Ekta invests deeply in civic activities. She is on the advisory board of the University of Florida School of Architecture and a volunteer with the Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival. She is also both a board member and a member of the volunteer faculty with Orlando Ballet.

For Ekta Desai, architecture is not simply about shaping buildings—it is about shaping the cultural and civic life of a place. Her work suggests a future for Central Florida defined not by rapid expansion alone, but by thoughtful, inclusive design that pays homage to community, history and a shared sense of belonging.

Ekta Desai is the creative force redefining what the next generation of architecture looks like in Central Florida. As Design Lead and Partner at Schenkel Shultz, she stepped into a role that required both stewardship and reinvention—honoring the firm’s six decades of architectural tradition while guiding it toward a future that is community-focused, socially responsive and attuned to the evolving fabric of the region.

Her early experience in New York City and Mexico City confirmed her belief that architecture should function as an engine for urban innovation. Today, Ekta champions projects that make communities more resilient, inclusive and connected—from cultural institutions and educational environments to the firm’s own new Winter Park headquarters, which is a striking example of adaptive reuse and thoughtful placemaking.

BUILDINGS THAT MATTER

A defining example of Ekta’s vision is The Edyth, home of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation in downtown Winter Park. Designed as a stage for community engagement, the three-story building—with its glass-curtain façade, two-story atrium and



Design. Culture. Values

834 Orange Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789
407.872.3322



A defining example of Ekta's vision is The Edyth (above), home of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation in downtown Winter Park. The project received AIA Orlando's Award of Honor. Her design leadership is equally visible in Schenkel Shultz's new Orange Avenue headquarters (below)—an award-winning transformation of a former commercial building into a 12,000-square-foot studio. The project earned Ekta recognition at the inaugural Alumni Design Awards at her alma mater, the University of Florida School of Architecture.

