

MEET THE 2026 JURY

This year's jury brings together accomplished firm leaders whose diverse practices and perspectives will shape the selection of AIAPV's 2026 Excellence in Design Awards. We thank Jury Chair Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, for assembling this distinguished panel and look forward to the exceptional work their deliberations will recognize.

2026 AIAPV Jury:

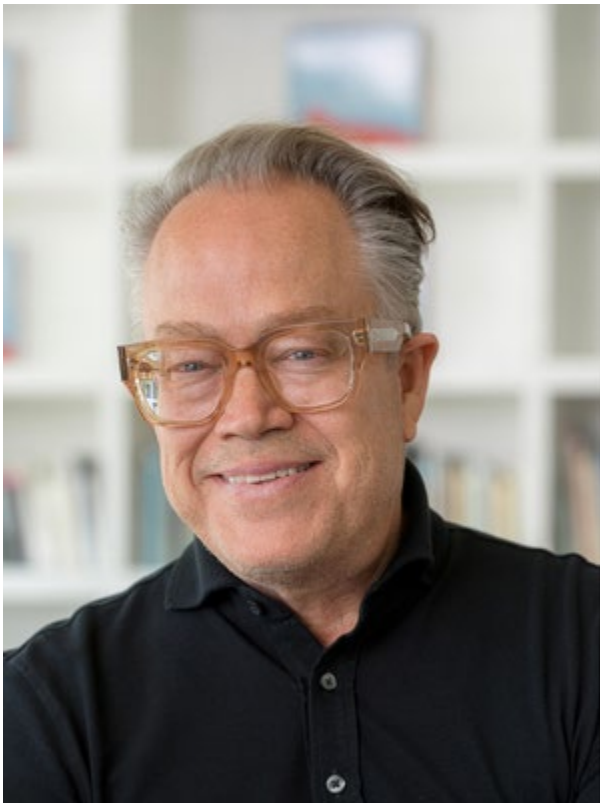
Marlon Blackwell, FAIA [Chair] – Marlon Blackwell Architects

Meryati (Ati) Blackwell, FAIA – Marlon Blackwell Architects

Yume Rudzinski, AIA – Architects 226 Inc.

Charles G. Sharpless, AIA – Somewhere Studio, LLC

Wesley Walls, AIA – Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects



Marlon Blackwell, FAIA [Jury Chair]

Founder

[Marlon Blackwell Architects](#) – Fayetteville, AR

Marlon Blackwell, FAIA together with his partner in life and work, Ati Blackwell, FAIA, ASID lead the internationally recognized practice Marlon Blackwell Architects. Their work has received recognition with significant publication and more than 200 design awards including the 2016 Cooper Hewitt National Design Award in Architecture and the 2025 Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize. Working between the universal

language of architecture and the particulars of place, they have cultivated a studio recognized for its formal clarity, contextual depth, and architectural integrity. In 2020, Marlon was honored with the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects for his enduring impact on the theory and practice of architecture. He's a lifetime member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and an inductee of the American Academy of Arts and Science. Equally respected as an educator, he served as the E. Fay Jones Distinguished Professor at the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas where he taught for over 30 years. Most recently, he was the Louis I. Kahn Visiting Professor at Yale University for the Fall of 2025. A monograph of their recent work, titled "Radical Practice", was published in 2022 by Princeton Architectural Press.



Meryati (Ati) Blackwell, FAIA, ASID

Partner

[Marlon Blackwell Architects](#) – Fayetteville, AR

Meryati Blackwell (Ati) leads an internationally renowned design practice with her partner, AIA Gold Medalist Marlon Blackwell, focusing deliberately on civic projects in education, recreation, health care, and culture that foster the community and the public good. In every instance, she works to offer dignity through design, treating people and places with respect, believing every project demands unique responses that are innovative, tactile, and carefully attuned to local conditions and cultures.

Ati's impactful work is seen through a wide variety of projects that have been recognized with significant publication and more than 200 design awards including the 2016 Cooper Hewitt National Design Award in Architecture and the 2025 Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize.

Ati is a constant presence in every project, co-creating architecture of the highest aspirations through a holistic design process that values interior and exterior environments equally. Her situational approach to stewardship of environmental, social, and economic resources demonstrates that architecture of the highest aspiration can be created anywhere and for everyone, setting an example for firms of all sizes and expanding the presence and effect of architecture in society at large.



Yume Rudzinski, AIA

Founder

[Architects 226 Incorporated](#) – Fayetteville, AR

Yume Rudzinski is a licensed architect, real estate development consultant, and owner's representative with more than 30 years of experience leading complex projects from concept through completion. Her unique background combines architecture, development, project management, and stakeholder engagement, allowing her to guide projects with a balanced focus on design excellence, financial performance, and long-term value.

As the founder of a226 Real Estate Development + Consulting, Yume advises institutional, nonprofit, healthcare, and private-sector clients on development strategy, feasibility analysis, entitlements, project delivery, and organizational planning. She regularly serves as an owner's representative, helping clients navigate complex decisions while protecting their interests throughout the design and construction process.

Prior to launching her consulting practice, Yume served as Director of Real Estate Development for Blue Crane, where she led development initiatives from feasibility through post-construction, supported

acquisitions and joint ventures, evaluated investment opportunities, and helped establish systems and standards for organizational growth. Her work included collaboration with investment teams, asset managers, developers, architects, and contractors to deliver projects that balanced financial objectives with exceptional design quality.

Throughout her career, Yume has managed multidisciplinary teams, coordinated public and private stakeholders, secured entitlements and approvals, negotiated contracts, and overseen budgets and schedules for projects ranging from custom residential developments to large-scale commercial, institutional, and mixed-use developments. She is particularly recognized for her ability to build consensus among diverse stakeholder groups while maintaining focus on project goals, budget, schedule, and quality.

Yume earned her Bachelor of Architecture from Syracuse University and is a licensed architect in Arkansas. She is a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI), where she serves on regional leadership initiatives focused on shaping the future of Northwest Arkansas.



Charles G. Sharpless, AIA

Co-Founder and Principal

[Somewhere Studio, LLC](#) – Fayetteville, AR

Associate Professor of Interior Architecture and Design

University of Arkansas

Charles Sharpless is an architect and educator based in Fayetteville, Arkansas where he is a founding partner of the award-winning architecture practice Somewhere Studio and Associate Professor of Interior

Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas. His work spans exhibitions, public art, interiors and building design with projects in the United States and Canada. Recent exhibitions include work at the Venice Architecture Biennale U.S. Pavilion (2025) and the South Forty Exhibition at the National Building Museum (2025).

Sharpless's work as an academic focuses on the overlaps of material experience and cultural context in architecture and the inherently interdisciplinary nature of design. His recent grant funded research includes a curatorial project on sustainable mountain bike trail design that positions the techniques of trail design and environmental stewardship as a catalyst for broader regional and community development.

Sharpless received a Master of Architecture from Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Architecture from Rice. Prior to forming Somewhere Studio, he practiced at Michael Maltzan Architecture in Los Angeles and Machado & Silvetti Associates in Boston. He was a 2021 MacDowell Fellow and 2023 Exhibit Columbus University Design Research Fellow.



Wesley Walls, AIA

Principal / Little Rock

[Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects](#) – Little Rock, AR

Wesley Walls, AIA, is an architect and design principal with Polk Stanley Wilcox. A native Arkansan, Wesley has been captivated since childhood by both the natural and built environment. Channeling his interest in manipulating the space around him, he pursued the discipline of architecture and has been instrumental in helping elevate Polk Stanley Wilcox to regional and national acclaim for design excellence. Having

served as both a juror and speaker for AIA chapters, his innovative approach to design is both collaborative and exploratory, with a relentless commitment to both placemaking and relationship building. His inclusive approach to teamwork, problem solving, and project management has cultivated an exceptional reputation with both clients and the broader architectural community.

With more than 30 years of experience, his award-winning portfolio of work has primarily focused on large institutional projects with a particular focus on higher education and healthcare commissions. Wesley's leadership extends beyond his firm, having served as President of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, President of the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design Professional Advisory Board, and President of the Arkansas State Board of Architects, Landscape Architects, and Interior Designers.

[Wesley Walls, AIA – Full Bio](#)