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## Archived Article - Wednesday, November 24, 2004

**Small Biz**

By Andy Meek

## Self Tucker Embraces Diversity, Individuality

ANDY MEEK

The Daily News

You dont have to look far to see the influence of Self Tucker Architects Inc. on Memphiss architectural landscape.

Several of the citys most prominent landmarks bear the firms fingerprint, including the refurbished Stax Museum of American Soul Music in South Memphis and FedExForum, the new crown jewel of Downtown Memphis. The firm also has completed work for the National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis International Airport and other high-profile properties and organizations.

Secret to success. That prominent portfolio is due in part to the professional passion of Jimmie Tucker and Juan Self, the two veteran architects who started the architecture, planning and interior design firm after being introduced through a mutual acquaintance. The pairs working relationship has resulted in swift growth for the company.

Tucker and Self stressed the varied nature of the companys work as the secret to its success a variety thats partly due to the unique interests both men bring to the table.

Self, for example, is a minister who combines his faith with his love of architecture, one of the reasons the firm has been involved in several church projects. Tucker, on the other hand, grew up near the Stax project and particularly enjoys the firms involvement in the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Memphis.

Meeting of the minds. The business partners have blended their interests seamlessly, and Tucker said he considers the partnership a blessing particularly because he had not worked with Self before starting the firm and did not entirely know what to expect.

I didnt necessarily know about his work ethic, nor he mine, Tucker said. But weve been fortunate in the way we came together. Its always difficult you can have lot of good ideas and talk to people about them, but its difficult to come together with someone and have a meeting of the minds. So that was very fortunate, and weve been partners almost 10 years.

Industry accolades. And since the two men began working together nearly a decade ago, Self Tucker has racked up a string of industry awards, including the Award of Excellence from the Memphis chapter of the American Institute of Architects for the firms role in the expansion of the Civil Rights Museum. One of the firms most notable projects is FedExForum, where Self Tucker was responsible for the exterior building envelope and vertical circulation of the arena.

Tucker said other Downtown projects the firm is currently involved in include an MLGW office building planned for property near Danny Thomas Boulevard and Beale Street.

As far as Self is concerned, the firms success is simply due to Self Tuckers mission to go above and beyond in meeting each clients needs.

Our focus in terms of our practice has been varied, Self said. But the primary emphasis, particularly recently, has just been on excellence in design services that meet and exceed our clients expectations.

Focus on diversity. Self Tuckers list of current projects is a study in diversity. The firm is heavily pushing an educational emphasis at the moment, having done work for LeMoyne-Owen College, for example, as well as some medical work. Other Self Tucker clients have included FedEx Corp., American Airlines and Memphis International Airport, where the firm is involved in several of the airports ongoing renovations.

We try to be diverse in how we approach our business, with services that appeal to a broad range of clients, Tucker said, adding that the firm stresses diversity and continuing education to its 22 employees.

Embracing individuality. An affinity for culture and diversity also plays a big part in the companys work. In fact, Self believes its the factor that separates Self Tucker from other architects in the local market. Self Tucker works hard to be sensitive to each clients needs, he said, a trait that helps the firm produce high-quality work.

We have quite a diverse group of people here, and thats one of the things that makes it exciting to be here, Self said. It really brings a lot to bear on our projects, the cultural diversity. So to me, it helps us really be able to speak to our clients on different levels and not just from an architectural standpoint.

We try to be sensitive to their needs, and a lot of times, having a cultural affinity helps break down barriers from the standpoint of communication.

Future interests. Both men are excited about the future of the firm. Tucker said hes encouraged by the number of projects taking place Downtown, and he hopes his firm can broaden its expertise. And the firm, which also has a Nashville presence, is looking to pursue more projects outside the Memphis region.

Both men are also confident that their unique interests, coupled with a single vision of how their firm should operate, will be the architect of more future successes.

Summing up the firms ambition, Self said: We believe that from an aesthetic standpoint, we can always reach a beautiful solution

and a building that will be deemed beautiful.

Self Tucker Architects Inc.

Owners: Juan Self and Jimmie Tucker

Founded: 1995

Basics: The architecture, planning and interior design firm has completed projects for clients ranging from churches to museums to Memphis International Airport.



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