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## S.A. architect wins design contest

By Jennifer Hiller - Express-News

A rubbery, orange, sea creature-inspired design by a San Antonio-based architect has won an international design competition.

Helen Pierce of PierceWorkshop won the \$8,000 DawnTown 2008 Award for her idea to cover one of Miami's utilitarian sewage pumping stations with a bright, tentacled work of architecture.

The design, called Pulse, looks like it's part sea anemone, part firework and part fantastical octopus.

Pulse would cover a sewage station at the corner of a park in a section of downtown Miami undergoing an urban transformation. An art museum, science museum and sports stadium are under construction, and luxury condos are for sale.

"My concept was that this museum park is going to have these world-class museums and luxury condos and a theater and sports areas. It has all of these big and important projects," Pierce said. "I wanted this to be fun. I wanted it to be something that made a memorable moment in the park and a memorable place in the city."

She also didn't want to lose sight of what the design is supposed to disguise.

"I wanted something large-scale and complementary to what is happening, and to recognize what it is," Pierce said. "Sewage pipes are like the organs of the city. They're necessary for us to live in the city, but they're kind of unmentionable."

Her design won out over 143 other entries.

The competition was judged during the recent Art Basel Miami Beach, considered the most important art show in the country, and a sister to Switzerland's Art Basel. The competition was sponsored by the Miami Downtown Development Authority.

There's no guarantee that Pulse will be built, but Pierce, who moved to San Antonio this fall and opened her own studio, is hoping that the project will help her launch her practice.

Previously, she's worked in Delaware, Pennsylvania and Arizona, doing projects for everything from higher education and museums to homes, commercial properties and baseball stadiums.

"I don't really care about the scale or the type of building as long as it's interesting," Pierce said.

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