

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Center for Architecture Announces the Recipients of the 2024 Stewardson Keefe LeBrun Travel Grant

*Three architects were awarded a total of \$25,000 to support their individual research and travel pursuits.*

January 6, 2025, New York, NY – The Center for Architecture is proud to announce the 2024 recipients of the [Stewardson Keefe LeBrun Travel Grant](#):

- **Sydne Cherelle Nance, “Been Here, New Come: The Gullah-Geechee Architectural Footprint”**
- **Malachi Rami Pursley, “Petroleum to Power: Reclaiming Louisiana's Oil Infrastructure in a Post Fossil Fuel World”**
- **Leslie Youngim Wilson, “AL(one)+TO(gather) Homes”**

The purpose of the LeBrun Grant is to further the personal and professional development of early- and mid-career architects through travel. The Center for Architecture awarded a total of



\$25,000 during the 2024 grant cycle, distributed across three recipients, to allow them to complete their research and travels.

#### 2024 LeBrun Recipients

##### **Sydne Cherelle Nance, Assoc. AIA**

**Project:** "Been Here, New Come: The Gullah-Geechee Architectural Footprint"

**Award:** \$9,800

Emblematic of African American culture and resilience, the Gullah-Geechee Corridor stretches across the US Southeast and retains profound ties to African lineage. Nance's study, "Been Here, New Come," examines regional African American architectural traditions, emphasizing the corridor's trans-Atlantic link to Sierra Leone. It delves into historic design, cultural spaces, and distinctive tabby architecture which have influenced American building styles. Expanding on Laverne Wells-Bowie's original work, the investigation advances architectural discourse with overlooked narratives. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork across South Carolina, Georgia, and Sierra Leone, Nance will refine spatial storytelling and enhance future architectural principles with insights on African American heritage design.

Sydne Nance, Assoc. AIA, is a trained architect with over three years of professional experience in the architecture industry. Her expanding design expertise encompasses an array of projects across residential, educational, and civic sectors. Demonstrating a practical approach, she has handled project phases from proposals to initial concept sketches through construction documents. Currently pursuing architectural licensure, Nance has sharpened her leadership skills, most notably in steering proposal efforts for significant architectural and master planning endeavors at Henning Larsen. At Henning Larsen, she focuses on approach and strategy to winning sustainable building projects in North America with a contextual and collaborative process. She plays a pivotal role in assembling and directing consultant teams for various architectural and urban development projects, enhancing her project management and collaborative abilities. She is committed to community service through active participation in initiatives such as Madame Architect and leading professional bodies like the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA). At Madame Architect, she applies her organizational and archival expertise as an Editorial Assistant, contributing to the platform's knowledge-sharing mission. Her leadership qualities were also prominent in her academic journey, where she presided over the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) chapter and balanced her rigorous academic schedule with collegiate athletics on the track & field team. Nance's portfolio, grounded in practical experience and complemented by active community engagement, positions her as a dedicated and emerging professional in the architecture field.

##### **Malachi Rami Pursley, AIA**

**Project:** "Petroleum to Power: Reclaiming Louisiana's Oil Infrastructure in a Post Fossil Fuel World"

**Award:** \$7,600



Petroleum to Power envisions a future beyond fossil fuels by reimagining Devil's Swamp Lake, a Superfund site in Baton Rouge, as a community asset. Inspired by the visionary works of SuperStudio, this project explores how heavily polluted industrial landscapes can be repurposed to meet public needs in a post-petroleum age. With Devil's Swamp Lake currently approved for remediation, the proposal offers a design strategy that empowers the local community to transform the site into a space of environmental restoration and resilience. This vision serves as a model for how Superfund sites can evolve to benefit the communities they once harmed.

Malachi Pursley, AIA, is an architect committed to delving into the intersection of architecture and justice. His passion lies in crafting spaces that go beyond aesthetics, prioritizing equality, inclusivity, and social impact through the art of world-building for human-centric environments. In his work, Pursley actively transforms surroundings into immersive worlds that prioritize both form and function. Pursley aspires to deliver experiences that not only captivate but actively contribute to healing, engagement, and positive transformation within built environments for the betterment of all. Recently licensed, Pursley is looking for opportunities to grow and take on more responsibility in the architectural profession.

**Leslie Youngim Wilson, AIA**

**Project:** "AL(one)+TO(gather) Homes"

**Award:** \$7,600

ALTO Homes redefines intergenerational living, blending independence with interdependence. The pandemic revealed critical gaps in senior housing and mental health, prompting a reevaluation of how we live. ALTO Homes prototypes address these challenges, providing multi-household, site-specific living arrangements that foster autonomy and connection. These prototypes—ranging from single compound homes to vertically stacked communities—incorporate legal frameworks and zoning research to support multigenerational families across diverse cultures. ALTO Homes aims to create healthier, sustainable communities where shared living is normalized, offering a model that embraces both individuality and community support. This project bridges architecture, law, and public engagement for transformative impact.

Leslie Y. Wilson, AIA, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Architecture at Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI. Shortly after graduation, she joined Architectural Research Office in New York City. In 1996, she acted as an Associate Director of Store Design for Prescriptives/Estee Lauder. While she was with the company and later as a consultant, she worked on creating new brand identities for various Estee Lauder companies such as Prescriptives, Bobbi Brown, and Tommy Hilfiger Cosmetics. She also worked with MR Architecture and Anderson/Schwartz Architects, as Project Designer for numerous civic, commercial and residential projects. She relocated to Santa Monica, California to join Van Tilburg, Banvard and Soderbergh, and shifted gears to work on large-scale multi-family housing projects such as Westwood Palazzo and Palazzo Park La Brea. Later, she joined Frank O. Gehry Architects and worked as a Project Architect of the new FOG office facility and the building it resides in Los Angeles, California. As an Associate, she also worked on many recent projects of the firm such as Art Gallery of Ontario, Brighton Housing Development, Brooklyn



Housing Development and Beekman Tower in New York City. As a senior project manager with Jones Lang LaSalle/ Project Development Services, she managed numerous high-profile projects for major national hospitality and corporate clients including Host Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt Development, T.Rowe Price, and Charles Schwab.

### **ABOUT CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Center for Architecture, in partnership with AIANY, awards scholarships and grant awards throughout the year for architectural students, architectural student journals, and practicing architects. Scholarships are open to New York city and grants are open to applicants nationwide. To find out more about our upcoming deadlines, please visit:

[centerforarchitecture.org/scholarships-grants](https://centerforarchitecture.org/scholarships-grants).

2024 grants and scholarships were awarded by the 2024 Scholarship Committee:

**Matthew Bremer, AIA**, Architecture in Formation

**Jennifer Sage, FAIA, LEED AP**, Sage and Coombe Architects

**Nina Cooke-John, AIA**, Studio Cooke John

**Sydney Maubert**, Studio Maubert

**Anthony Titus**, Anthony Titus Studio

**Jessica Sheridan, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**, Mancini Duffy

**Sara Caples, AIA, NOMA, NA**, CAPLES JEFFERSON ARCHITECTS

**Richard C. Yancey, AIA, LEED AP**, Building Energy Exchange

**Eunjeong Seong, RA, LEED AP**, Visible Weather; Bell-Seong Architecture

**Peter Robinson**, Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning; WorkUrban

### **About the Center for Architecture**

The Center for Architecture is the premier cultural venue for architecture and the built environment in New York City, informed by the complexity of the City's urban fabric and in dialogue with the global community. The Center shares a home with the AIA New York Chapter and has the unique advantage of drawing upon the ideas and experiences of practicing architects to produce thought-provoking exhibitions, informative public programs, and quality design education experiences for K-12 students. It also leads New York City's annual month-long architecture and design festival, Archtober. The Center for Architecture's aim is to further public knowledge about New York City architecture and architects, foster exchange and collaboration among members of the design, development, building, scholarly, and policy sectors, and inspire new ideas about the role of design in communities by presenting contemporary and practical issues in architecture and urbanism to a general audience.

[centerforarchitecture.org](https://centerforarchitecture.org)