

Press Release



For Immediate Release

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New Children's Library by MKCA to Open at Concourse House in Bronx, New York

Press kit: <https://bit.ly/2ARHHGO>



Photo by Alan Tansey

New York, NY – Michael K. Chen Architecture (MKCA) has designed the new Children's Library at *Concourse House: Home for Women and Their Children*, a Bronx-based shelter that serves women with young children under the age of nine who are transitioning out of homelessness. Established in 1991, Concourse House works to eliminate homelessness by providing families with safe, stable, transitional housing, coupled with a range of social

services and programming to help those families make successful transitions into permanent housing.

The library is an important new component of the educational resources for the children at Concourse House, and is unique among the other program spaces as a place that is specifically dedicated to books and reading, and a much needed space for volunteer and staff-led readings, story times, and other events organized around books. The importance of reading for the cognitive development and emotional health of children is widely recognized, and the library is designed to provide space and opportunity for exploration and imagination for children who, more often than not, do not have access to their own books.

Situated in an dark and underused mezzanine space under the vaulted ceiling of the Concourse House multipurpose space, the library is designed to break from the institutional quality of the other program spaces in the building, to engage the children visually through a bright, colorful, and playful environment, and to allow for flexible transitions between individual and organized group readings and storytelling.

A round, illuminated shelving unit is nestled against the barrel vaulted ceiling and serves as a backdrop to the library activities and as a visually permeable protective barrier between the library and the double height space below, affording glimpses of the spaces beyond through a screen of wood dowels. Below the vaulted ceiling, additional shelves are lined with upholstered poufs that can be brought out as seating elements, or serve as a continuous upholstered backrest when stored, allowing the children to comfortably sit on the floor. A large and colorful carpet incorporates the shapes and colors of the room into a playful soft landscape of varied colors and textures. Two rounded Corian tables are integrated into the shelving and the fully paneled end wall of the library. The paneling incorporates additional LED lighting, and a back-painted glass erasable writing surface.

The project is made possible by Julie and Kate Yamin and numerous small donations. The library has been filled with 1200 children's books from Sisters Uptown Bookstore, a community resource center and bookstore in Washington Heights. MKCA provided all design and architecture services pro-bono, and led the effort to solicit additional in-kind

donations from other designers, suppliers, fabricators, and contractors in service of the project.

“The love of books and of reading is something that defined my own childhood, and that of everyone on our team,” said MKCA principal Michael Chen. “The space for imagination and for reflection that books afford is such a gift, especially for kids who don’t currently have a permanent home, or might not have a space of their own. It’s a privilege to work with Concourse House to make the library a reality for such a deserving group of children.”

The firm has also coordinated an auction of art and furniture, lighting, and design objects to benefit Concourse House. The auction will be hosted on [Paddle8.com](http://paddle8.com) from Dec 4-18, 2018, and features works donated by leading New York design studios, galleries, and individual artists, and curated by MKCA.

The auction can be accessed via the following link:

<http://paddle8.com/auction/childrens-library-at-concourse-house>

Project Credits

MKCA Project Team: Braden Caldwell, Michael Chen

General Contractor and Millwork: Structure Ventures

Generous support provided by Julie Yamin and Kate Yamin

Donations to the Library

Alex Proba

Asher Israelow

Bec Brittain

Birnam Wood Studio

Christopher Kurtz

Chronicle Books

David Weeks

Egg Collective

Ezra Tessler, Courtesy of 315 Gallery

Fernando Mastrangelo Studio

Haley Josephs, Courtesy of 315 Gallery

Kin & Company

Kinder Modern

Ladies and Gentlemen Studio

Maharam

Manzanares Furniture

Mary Wallis for Lindsey Adelman Studio

Pelle

Phaedo, Courtesy of Colony

Ramos Trucking

Schoolhouse Electric

Structure Ventures

Visibility

Vonnegut Kraft and Mary Ping





Photos by Alan Tansey

MICHAEL K CHEN ARCHITECTURE // MKCA, established in 2011 in New York City, is an architecture practice dedicated to producing innovative and superbly crafted work for clients seeking thoughtful and considered design.

MKCA's approach is deeply informed by curiosity and a love of tinkering, of drawing, of collaboration, and of making. Their methods and capabilities are at the leading edge of design, analysis, manufacturing, and construction, but they strive to produce exceptional experiences, intricately choreographed spaces, and works that are unexpected, hyper-useful, intelligent, and full of delight. They have experience designing and building at a diverse range of scales and bring an ultra-refined sensibility and attention to detail to projects ranging from individual micro apartments to entire buildings. They have developed a reputation for excelling at complex urban projects, and are adept at synthesizing multiple functions, systems, and constituencies into elegant and often beguilingly simple works. MKCA serves a diverse and international client base. They are based in New York City and work across the United States and worldwide.