

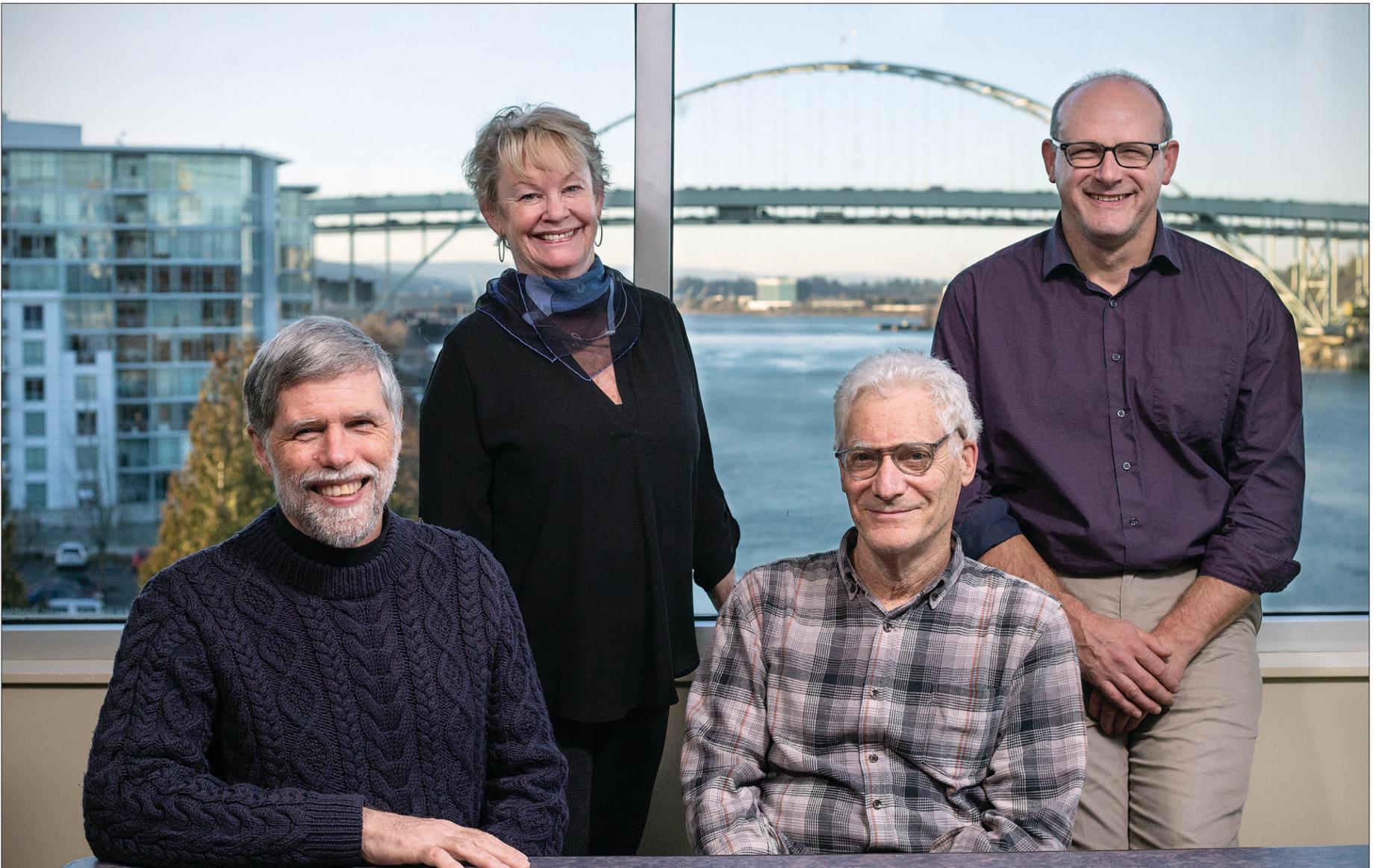
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PLANTING A SEED FOR WINERY DESIGN

Soderstrom Architects has capitalized on an opportunity to expand its range by adding Ferar Studio



Sam Tenney/DJC

From left, Reed Lewis, Alex Zimmer, Larry Ferar and Dan Van Calcar of Soderstrom Architects are teaming to diversify the firm's portfolio. Lewis and Ferar are part of Soderstrom's Ferar Studio, which specializes in winery and distillery design; Zimmer oversees all of Soderstrom's interior design work, and helps develop efforts by Ferar Studio.

By CHUCK SLOTHOWER
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Larry Ferar was beginning to consider retiring from the Portland design firm he founded that focuses on wineries and distilleries. He needed a landing spot for his longtime employees.

Principals at Soderstrom Architects, who have known Ferar for more than 30 years, saw an opportunity to bring in work that would diversify their firm's portfolio. They began talking, and let the idea ferment. As of Jan. 2, a blend was made.

Laurence Ferar and Associates is no more, but Soderstrom agreed to take on five employees, including three architects. The practice is now known as Ferar Studio.

"They've been financially a very viable company over the last decades that they've been in business, and they bring to our market-sector mix a whole different clientele, which I think adds stability to both companies as the economy ebbs and flows," said Dan Van Calcar, managing principal at Soderstrom.

"They also have a very similar design approach to us," Van Calcar added.

With the addition of Ferar's people, Soderstrom now has 44 employees.

Larry Ferar first worked with Cameron Hyde, a founding partner of Soderstrom's predecessor firm, in the early 1980s while designing Beaumont Middle School. Ferar went on to start his own firm, and shifted focus to wineries beginning with a project for Adelsheim Vineyard in Newberg. Ferar met the Adelsheims when his daughter was placed in a kindergarten class taught by Ginny Adelsheim.

Ferar & Associates ended up designing six phases of various expansions as Adelsheim Vineyard grew along with the popularity of Oregon pinot noir. Ferar and Associates went on to design numerous other wineries and tasting rooms, including Alexana, Résonance and Van Duzer.

The work has expanded beyond Oregon's wine country to Canada and New Zealand, and consulting on winery designs in China and England. Larry Ferar has also worked as a consultant with Olson Kundig of Seattle.

For its Oregon projects, Ferar Studio often works with Andrew Scott Construction in McMinnville.

Ferar Studio also designs distilleries, an area where Reed Lewis, an architect who became Ferar's first employee in 1988, has expertise. The firm designed Clear Creek Distillery in Portland, among others. Those projects have become a larger portion of the studio's portfolio.

"Clearly there's a growing interest in distilleries and distilled products," Lewis said.

Distilleries must be designed according to strict building codes because of high-proof alcohol's volatility.

Ferar and Associates' first winery projects were for production facilities only. That meant an industrial feel, with space for barrels and crush pads. But in recent years, wineries have placed more emphasis on tasting rooms and special events spaces. Vintners and distillers typically clear a higher profit on wine and spirits sold in-house rather than in off-site stores or bars.

For wineries, the emphasis on tasting rooms contributes to a growing desire to connect visitors with the agricultural environment. Larry Ferar believes his firm has designed more wineries than any other local firm, but competition in the market may be growing.

Wachter Architecture was hired by Furioso Vineyards in Dundee to design a tasting room and winery. It opened last summer, and received two American Institute of Architects awards - one from the Portland chapter and one from the Northwest and Pacific Region.

"We like that project in the sense that to do a successful winery project, you don't have to have done an enormous amount of these projects before," said Ben Wachter, principal architect. "You just have to be a good architect."

The Furioso design used a concrete base and a fully transparent glass tasting room.

"We view our jobs as architects to distill information and to come up with a clear and concise design," Wachter said. "We rely on experts to tell us what makes a good winery or what makes a good production facility, and we use that criteria to come up with a good design."



Courtesy of Soderstrom Architects

A 19,000-square-foot winery for Abbott Claim, near Carlton, is being designed by Soderstrom Architects' Ferar Studio.

Fieldwork Design and Architecture was also honored in 2018 by AIA Portland for the design of Day Wines in Dundee.

Development of new wineries tends to be countercyclical to economic trends, Ferar said. In downturns, wealthy individuals look for hard assets like real estate and can get more for their money in design and construction.

Soderstrom's new winery studio adds to its legacy that began in 1984. The firm's principals were involved in the creation of Pioneer Square. Subsequently, the firm has focused on work for schools, local government buildings and health care providers. Soderstrom has a long relationship with the University of Portland, and has designed several buildings on the North Portland campus.

Larry Ferar, who started with a studio in his garage on Corbett Avenue, said he plans to retire within the next several years. Ferar Studio is currently working on designs for Abbott Claim Vineyard near Carlton, Portland Wine Co. - known for its Love & Squalor brand - and a winery in Kentucky.