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Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

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Inviting Spaces





MEET THE ARCHITECT



Mark Rios

Innovative gathering places around the globe are recent achievements of Los Angeles firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios, a firm renowned for multidisciplinary projects—complete environments that celebrate the unique qualities and memories of each place and its culture.—*Sharon King Hoge*



Confronting the sameness of globalization, Mark Rios combines the mindset of an archaeologist and the tenacity of a detective to create designs that express cultural identity and tradition in contemporary terms. A California native who studied at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, he returned west to launch a firm with the mission of researching the unique qualities and memories of each place and working to make the design tell that story. Colorful awnings in San Antonio's main square reference the city's arts and crafts tradition; steel trees in Chicago's Quincy Court create a garden setting for a Calder flamingo; the shape and color of Tyson's Square outside Washington, DC, recall the peach orchard that originated there. RCH Studios' footprint in hometown Los Angeles ranges from the Hollywood Bowl to Row DTLA, yet there's no singular look to the firm's work, which reveres each project's individual context. rcbstudios.com.



1. Why did you choose bright pink for the chairs installed in Grand Park? Our research showed it's a multicultural color, common in all community cultures—Central, South and Latin America. It's also very joyous, always in bloom.



2. What are essential components of gathering places that bring people together? They have to be safe and have a comfort to them, and they have to be programmed with a use for their being. Around Glendale, a lot of people play chess after work when it's dark. We provided a lot of seating and light with chess piece light towers, and Chess Park has become a popular place even for people who don't play the game.



3. I hear that you collect plates? They're such an important part of our culture, rich with memories. I buy plates and have a meal on them and remember meals and places I've been. They're avid storytellers.



4. Recently Elon Musk shipped a car into outer space. What would you have sent? Something multicultural so someone could see how earthlings play—eight different toys from eight different cultures, like the elaborate Latin American tops with a string you pull that releases the top.

5. Your recent book is titled *NotNeutral*. What is wrong with neutral? It's not necessarily a color palette, it's a belief system. We believe in having an opinion and taking a stand—a design idea with personality.

GRAND PARK: JIM SIMMONS; CHESS PARK: TOM BONNIER; CITY PLATE: SKANDIA SCHAEFER; HEADSHOT: JIM SIMMONS