

## Overall Building Description

Boulder architect Vern Seieroe, AIA, modified the original open Tajik design to enclose the building from the weather and to ensure that it would conform to required safety and building codes and structural and handicapped requirements. In addition, he designed the new rear addition and the required disability access to and throughout the building.

There are two parts of the building, the “Teahouse” portion which houses the public restaurant, and a more utilitarian addition on the east side of the building which contains a commercial kitchen, office space, disabled accessible public restrooms, a hallway leading to a second entrance to the building and a disabled access ramp on the north side of the building. There is also a ramp for restaurant deliveries on the south side of the building. An indented 7’-4” ‘link’ joins the two parts of the building.

The dimensions of the Teahouse are 12m x 15m (approximately 40’ x 50’). The overall dimensions of the irregularly shaped addition are 32’ x 36’. The entire building with its east addition has total dimensions of approximately 52’- 6” wide along 13<sup>th</sup> Street x 81’-4” deep.

## Floor Plan

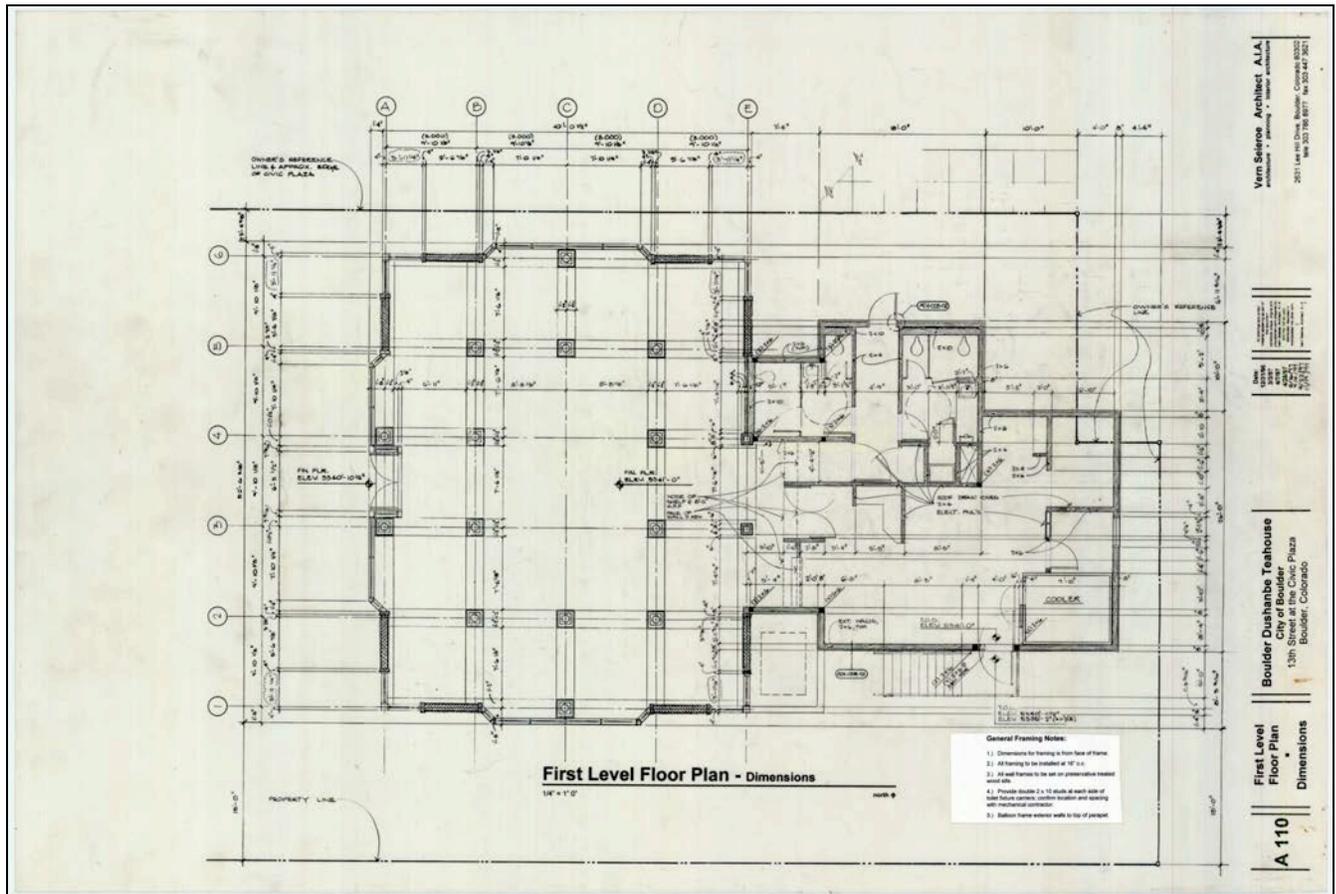


Fig.49 Construction Drawing A110, First Level Floor Plan, Vern Seieroe, AIA, Architect (north is up on drawing)

*This floor plan of the Teahouse with 14 columns and 8 wall panels (decorative tile on the exterior and carved plaster on the interior) added windows and link to new addition with kitchen, office and rest rooms.*

The main “Teahouse” portion of the building has large extending shallow bay wood windows on three sides of the building. The north and south bay windows each enclose a central interior hand-carved wood column. The west bay window incorporates the main entrance and encloses an interior column on each side of the door. Decorative exterior tile panels, framed with beige bricks, flank the bay windows. At each corner of the Teahouse two wood windows meet at a right angle. All windows are triple hung, with operable top and bottom sashes. Except for the eight tile panels that are backed with concrete block, the skin of the building is glass.

The east addition to the building was designed to be subservient to the exuberantly decorated Teahouse. It has simple forms and detailing. Beige colored stucco covers the wood frame walls.

## Roof Plan

From the exterior, the Teahouse roof appears to be hipped, but, in fact, it conceals a large skylight that is centered over the interior space above the interior pool with statues. The roof of the addition is flat with the massing being lessened by parapets extending along the plane of the wall of the link.

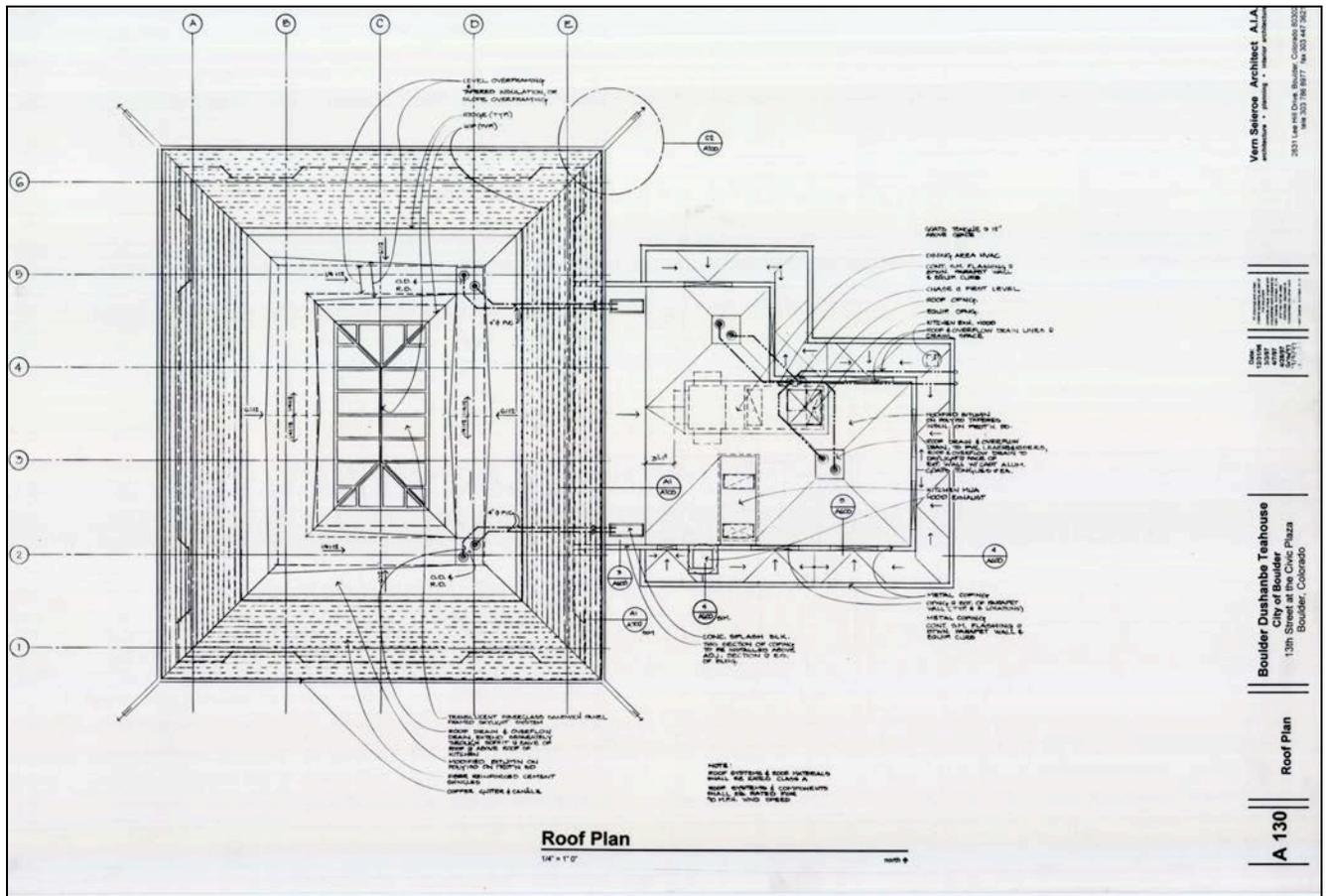


Fig.50 Construction Drawing A130, Roof Plan, Vern Seieroe, AIA, Architect (north is up on drawing)

*Looking down on the Teahouse, the hipped roof features a central rectangular skylight that illuminates the restaurant. The addition has a flat roof.*

## Building Elevations

Because of budgetary concerns, changes were made to the design of the Teahouse as it was being constructed. These changes are not shown on the following original construction drawings, and there are no drawings showing what was actually built, or “As Built Drawings.” Because of public safety issues relating to the flood plain, the entire building was raised from Thirteenth Street on the West, and from both the ditch on the South and the Civic Plaza on the North.

### West Elevation:

On the west side of the building, the main entry is recessed into a large bay window. The entry is composed of a pair of large single pane, glass-paneled doors. The bay window is composed of two west-facing windows and two angled windows. Two decorative tile panels flank the bay window. Windows meet to form the northwest and southwest corners of the Teahouse.

The deep cornice is brightly painted and there is exterior lighting that is not shown on the drawing.

Steps lead to the lower dining areas on the north (left) and south (right). The south dining area is lower than the north one and borders the irrigation ditch.

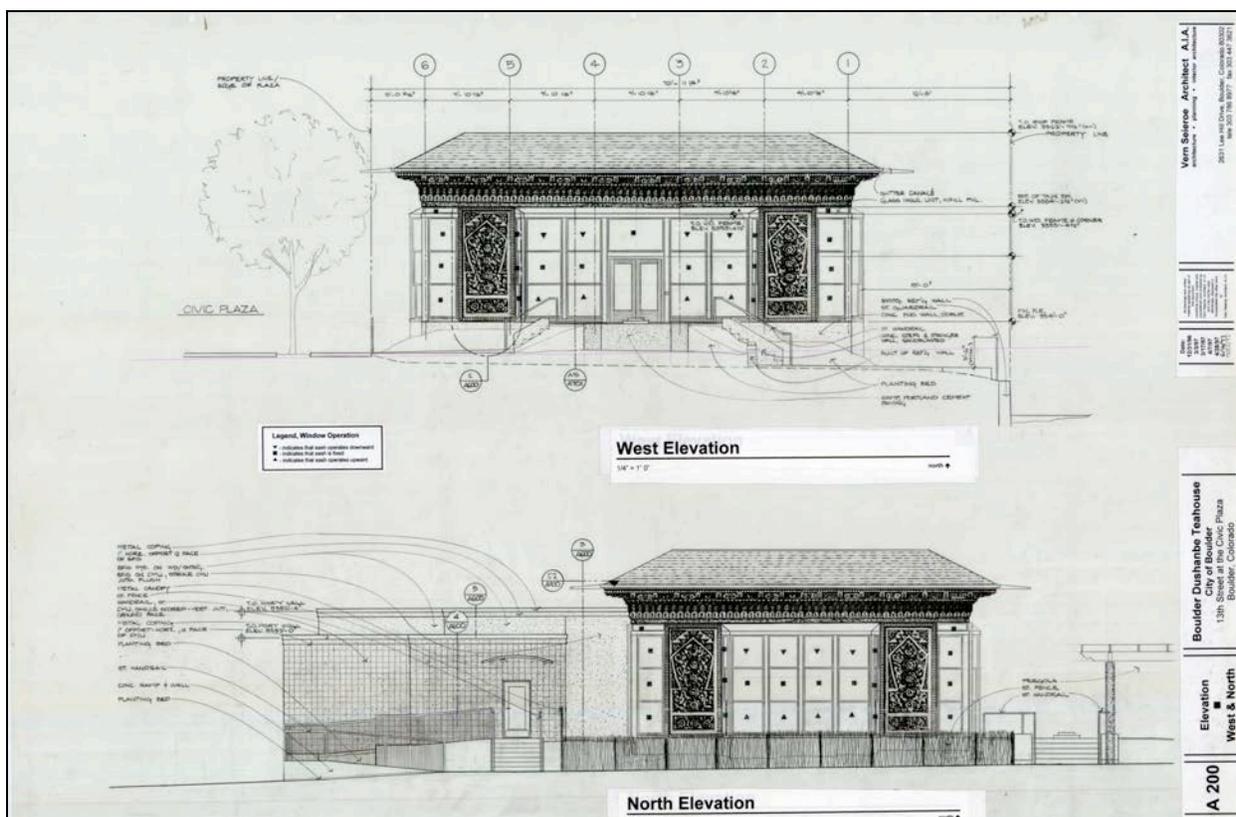


Fig.51 Construction Drawing A200, West and North Elevations, Vern Seieroe, AIA, Architect

*The Teahouse portion of the drawings is how the building was built; the addition was not built as shown on these drawings.*

### North Elevation:

On the north side of the building, tile panels flank a large shallow bay window composed of four north-facing windows and two angled windows. In the interior of the building, there is a carved wood column that is centered in the bay. Windows meet to form the northwest and southwest corners of the Teahouse. Two decorative tile panels flank the bay window.

The deep cornice is brightly painted and there is exterior lighting that is not shown on the drawing.

Steps and a handicapped ramp lead to a service door in the addition. The finished building does not match this drawing: the addition is finished with stucco not concrete blocks as shown and the fence was built in a different design.

### East Elevation:

On the east side of the building, an indented “link” joins the two parts of the building opposite of where

there is the large bay window and the main entry on the west side. Two decorative tile panels flank the “link” (only partially visible on the drawing). Windows meet to form the northeast and southeast corners of the Teahouse.

The deep cornice is brightly painted and there is exterior lighting that is not shown on the drawing.

Steps and delivery ramp exist on the south side of the building (not seen on the drawing). The disabled ramp on the northeast corner of the addition gives access to the building. An enclosed space to conceal trash dumpsters is not seen on the drawing.

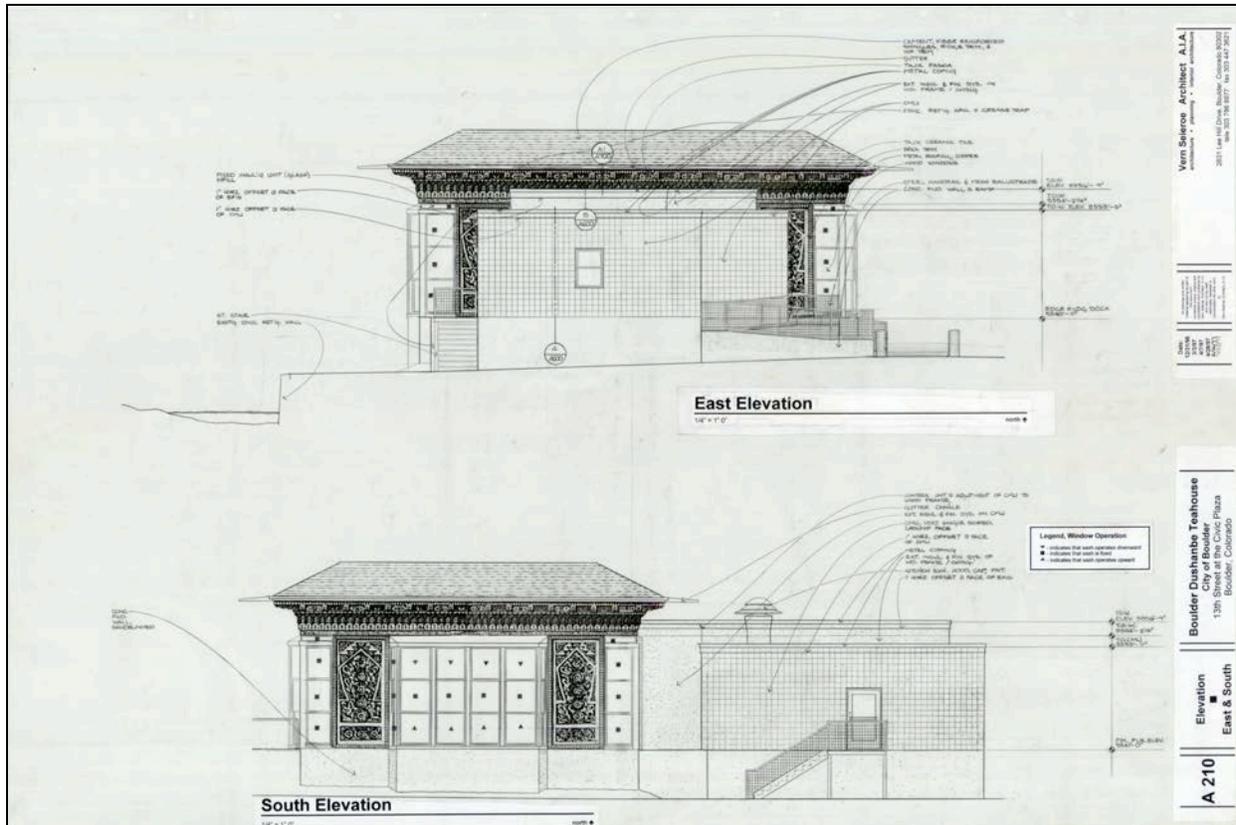


Fig.52 Construction Drawing A210, East and South Elevations, Vern Seieroe, AIA, Architect

*The Teahouse portion of the building was built as shown, but the addition was not built as shown on the drawing.*

### South Elevation:

On the south side of the building, tile panels flank a large shallow bay window composed of four south facing windows and two angled windows. In the interior of the building, there is a carved wood column that is centered in the bay. Windows meet to form the southwest and southeast corners of the Teahouse. Two decorative tile panels flank the bay window.

The deep cornice is brightly painted and there is exterior lighting that is not shown on the drawing.

Steps and a delivery ramp (not shown on the drawing) lead to a service door in the addition. The finished building does not match this drawing: the addition is finished with stucco not concrete blocks as shown.

## ***Exterior Description***

The “Teahouse” portion of the building is designed in a Persian/Tajik style and features traditional decorative exterior elements of tile panels and intricately carved and painted wood trim.

### **Faïence Tile Panels**

The panels on the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse “were created using the same technique used to make the walls of many of the great mosques of the Middle East. Faïence was a Persian invention ‘which is one of the most brilliant types of architectural decoration ever used, and one of the most difficult and delicate of all ceramic arts.’” It has been made in the same manner since the 1400s. Craftsmen first fire tiles in different colors and cut them in shapes to form the desired panel. “The technique is difficult, extremely labor intensive, and therefore expensive, but creates faïence of exceptional quality and brilliance.”<sup>56</sup>



Fig.53 Historic Tile Panel with vase and flowers Mary Axe Photo



Fig.54 Historic Tile Panel with Mirab and flowers Mary Axe Photo

*Flowers fill the left tile panel which is centered in a recessed arched area, while on the right flowers and vines grow up from a flower pot, symbolizing the Tree of Life, within a Quibla shape panel. The same techniques used to create these beautiful panels were use to create the tile panels of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse.*

Victor Zabltnikov, a Tajik artist, worked in Dushanbe to create the eight colorful exterior ceramic panels that embellish the Boulder Teahouse today. Each panel was made by hand, then cut and fired. The cut tiles were then carefully packed into crates, shipped to Boulder, and finally installed on the building. Each panel is based on the “Tree of Life” motif that is found throughout the Middle East and signifies Eternity.

“Each of the 66’x13’ panels is organized around one of the most important designs in Islamic art, the prayer arch, or *mirab*, framing classic Persian-Tajik vegetal and animal motifs. Because the *mirab* is the focal point in the mosque and in the ritual of prayer one must face it during prostration, a great deal of

<sup>56</sup> The Meaning of the Boulder Dushanbe Teahouse, George Peknik, 2004, Hoopoe Publications, pg.24-25

attention has been devoted to its decoration in most periods throughout the Islamic world. Arabesques and other vegetal motifs are also found in the designs of the panels.”<sup>57</sup>

The ewer, *ibrik*, a pitcher that is used for ritual purifications in Islam and also by tile makers is seen on the tile panels. “It’s for washing hands. It’s like a symbol of ceramicists... My professor, Alnis Lipan and I thought it would be the symbol of the ceramicists who worked on the Boulder Teahouse project... There is an ‘L’ for Lipan in some of the ewers on the Choihonas’s ceramic panels. My favorite ceramic panels are the ones with the pomegranates and grapes.. the butterflies came out white and I don’t know why. I love the center of the panel of the pomegranates and I love the one with the grapes and the white butterflies.”<sup>58</sup>

### West Elevation - Tile Panels

The main front entry of the building faces west and is flanked by two large tile panels. Butterflies, grapes and grape leaves are the main design elements of the panels.



Fig.55 West Side of Building with bay window, main front entry and decorative tile panels. Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo, 2010  
*Pink, blues, yellow and white tiles were formed, divided, and painted in Dushanbe and later reassembled here in Boulder.*

<sup>57</sup> [The Meaning of the Boulder Dushanbe Teahouse](#), George Peknik, 2004, Hoopoe Publications, pg.24

<sup>58</sup> [The Meaning of the Boulder Dushanbe Teahouse](#), George Peknik, 2004, Hoopoe Publications, Interview with Tajik Viktor Zabltnikov, p.25

### ***West Side/North Panel***

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Two pink butterflies with two pink flowers are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A central vertical “tree of life” floral element with a green background and white intertwined arabesques and vines with pink grapes on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional pink and white flowers. The vines and grapes grow up from a large central grape leaf and signify the recurring theme of the “tree of life” that is seen throughout the Teahouse. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two bunches of pink grapes set in a blue eight-petal flower that form the base for the panel.

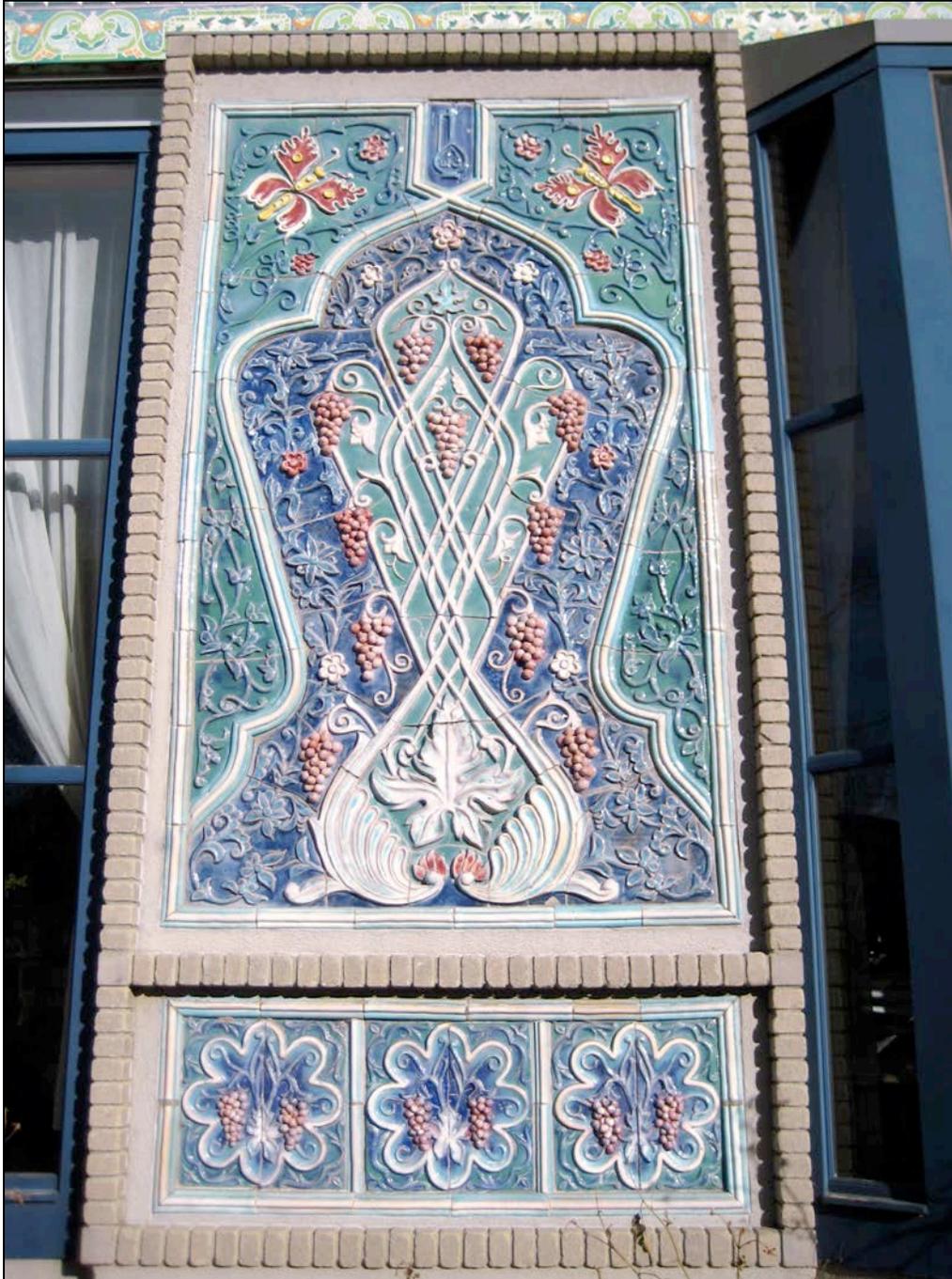


Fig.56 Tile Panel, North Corner of West Side

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*Bunches of grapes hang from vines coming up from a leaf and bulb, signifying the continuation of life. Each bunch of grape is slightly different from the others.*

### ***West Side/South Panel***

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Two yellow and white butterflies with two pink bunches of grapes are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. Two additional bunches of grapes are in the lower green surround. A central vertical “tree of life” element with a green background and white intertwined arabesques and vines with pink grapes on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional, pink and white flowers. The vines and grapes grow up from a large central grape leaf. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two bunches of pink grapes set in a blue eight-petal flower that form the base for the panel.

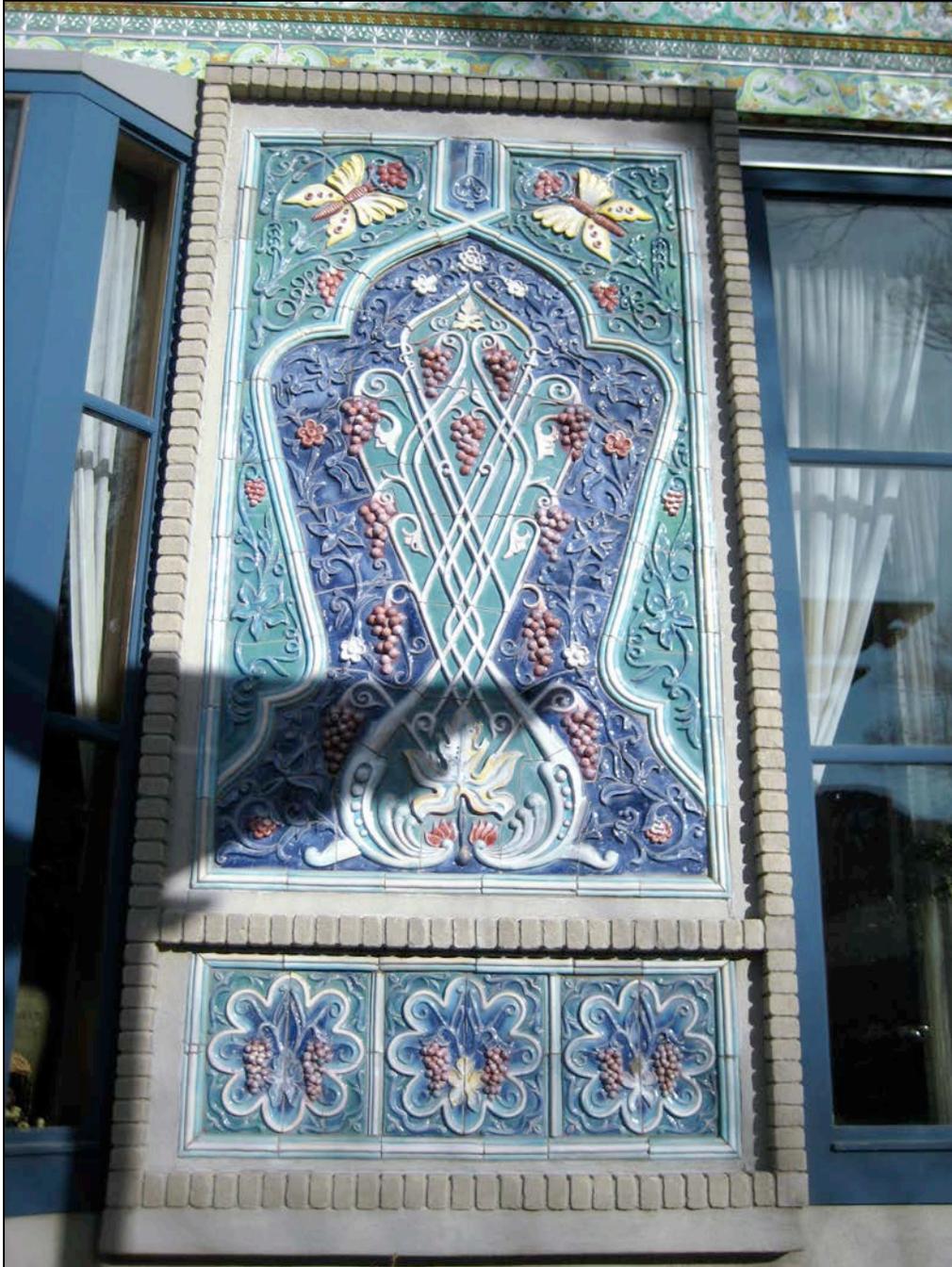


Fig.57 Tile Panel, South Corner of West Side

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*The butterflies in this panel are yellow and white as compared to the pink ones on the north panel, the grapes are nearer them, and the bulb and leaf are different, also.*

### North Elevation – Tile Panels

On the north side of the building, two tile panels flank a large bay window. The east panel has gladiolas and butterflies; the west panel has eremurus (foxtail lilies), partridges and rosettes.



Fig.58 North Side of Building with bay window flanked by decorative tile panels.

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo, 2010

*With the light shining from the west, it is possible to see through the northwest corner of the building where a raised topchan is located in the interior.*

*North Side/East Panel*

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Two pink and yellow butterflies with one yellow and two pink flowers are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A central vertical “tree of life” element of white intertwined arabesques composed of gladiolas on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional yellow, pink and white flowers. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two pink gladiolas set in a blue eight-petal flower that form a base for the panel. This panel is similar to the east panel on the south side.

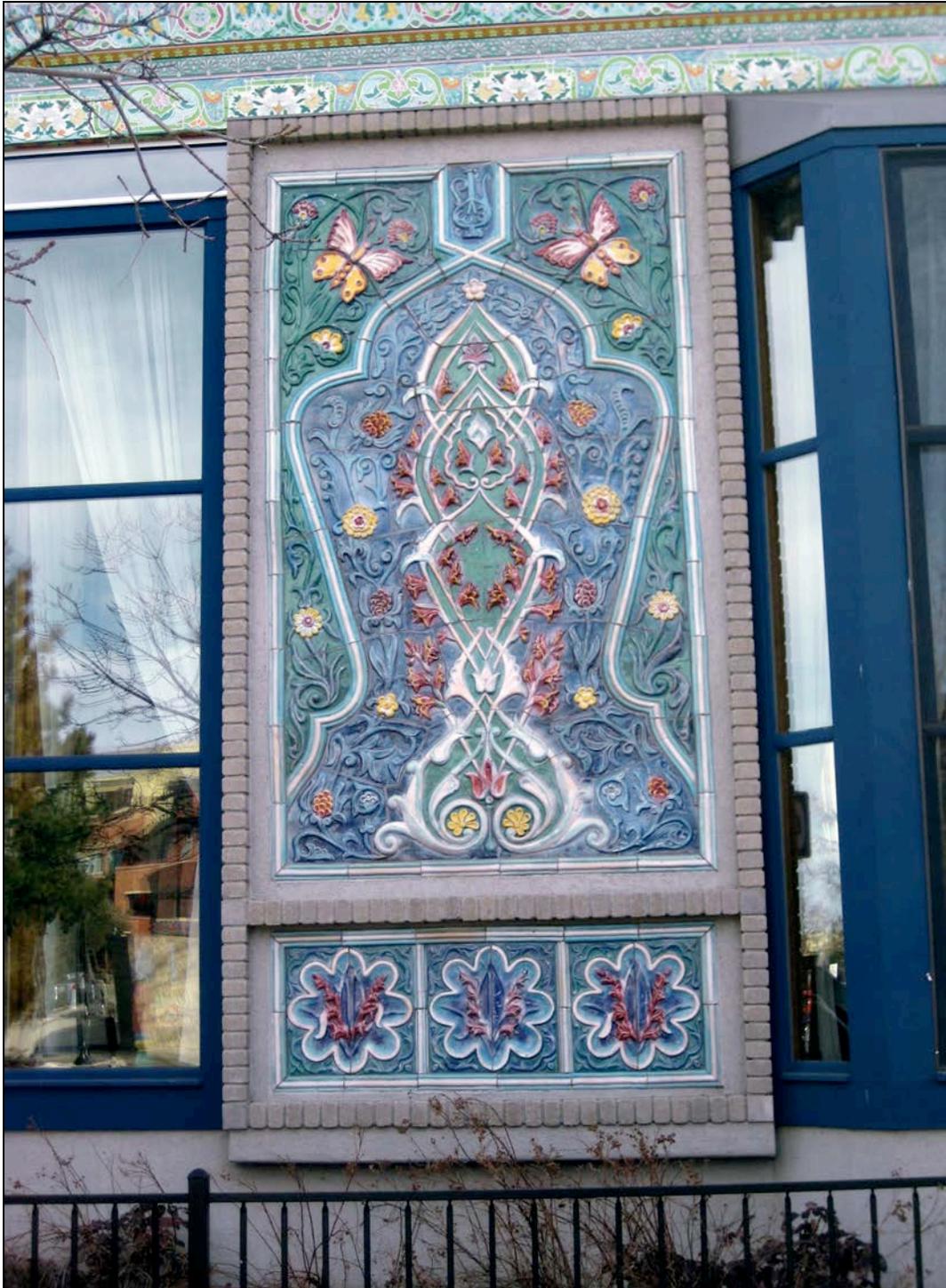


Fig.59 East Panel of North Side

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*Bright yellow marigold looking flowers are interspersed in the panel with pink foxgloves.*

***North Side/West Panel***

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Two colorful white, pink and yellow partridges with yellow and pink flowers are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A central vertical “tree of life” element of white intertwined heart shaped arabesques and pink foxtail lilies on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional yellow and pink flowers. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two pink foxgloves set in a blue eight-petal flower, that form the base for the panel. This panel is similar to the west panel on the south side.



Fig.60 West Panel of North Side

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*Bright yellow is concentrated at the top of this panel in a few flowers and in the pink, white and yellow partridges.*

### **South Elevation – Tile Panels**

On the south side of the building, two tile panels flank a large bay window. The west panel has eremurus

(foxtail lilies), partridges and rosettes; the east panel has gladiolas and butterflies.



Fig.61 South Side of Building with bay window flanked by decorative tile panels.

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo, 2010

*Because the site slopes toward the irrigation ditch, the base or plinth of the south wall is much higher and more prominent here than at the north side.*

### ***South Side/West Panel***

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by

ceramicists after working. Two colorful white, pink and yellow partridges with yellow flowers are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A central vertical ‘tree of life’ element of white intertwined heart shaped arabesques composed of pink foxtail lilies on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional yellow and pink flowers. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two pink foxgloves set in a blue eight-petal flower, that form the base for the panel. This panel is similar to the north side, west panel.



Fig.62 West Panel of South Side, viewed through branches

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*The partridges on this panel are fatter and more monochromatic than the corresponding birds on the north side.*

### ***South Side/East Panel***

The ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of the panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Two pink, yellow and white butterflies with two pink and white flowers are in the upper corners of the green background panel. A central vertical “tree of life” element of white intertwined arabesques composed of gladiolas on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch with additional yellow, pink and white flowers. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two pink gladiolas set in a blue eight-petal flower that form a base for the panel. This panel is similar to the north side, east panel.

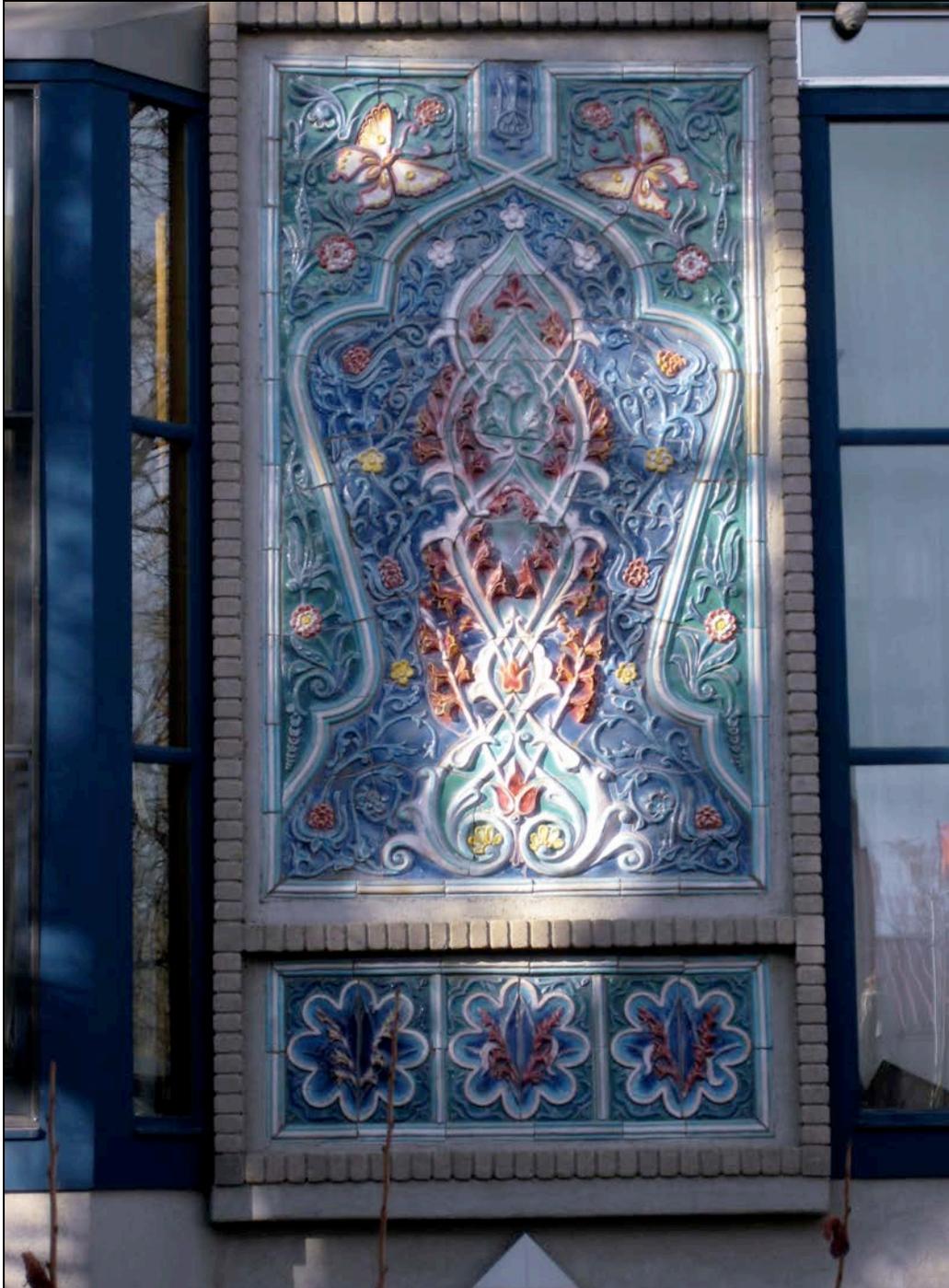


Fig.63 East Panel of South Side

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*With its three white flowers and pink, white butterflies and gladiolas this panel is similar to the corresponding panel on the north side, which has only one white flower and less white in the butterflies.*

### **East Elevation – Tile Panels**

On the east side of the building, the indented link between the “Teahouse” and the addition separates the

two tile panels, and therefore cannot be seen together at one time. Both east panels have phoenix-like birds in the designs and an ewer or *ibrik* is located at the top of each panel. It is used for washing before eating and also by ceramicists after working. Both panels also have a central vertical “tree of life” vase element set into a *mirab* shaped arch.

***East Side/North Panel***

Two colorful red, pink and yellow phoenix-like birds with yellow flowers and white vines are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A white vase displays a bouquet of yellow flowers with a central purple flower and twelve pomegranates on their stems. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with pink and white daisies set in a blue eight-petal flower, forming the base of the panel.

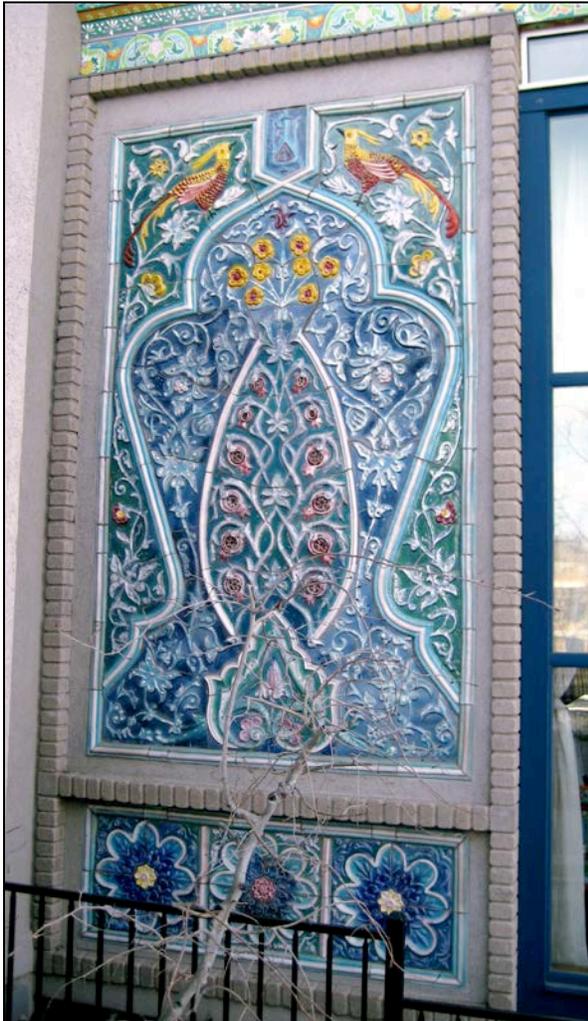


Fig.64 North panel on East Side Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo, 2010      Fig.65 South panel on East Side Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010  
*Subtle differences between the panels include the color and types of flowers*

***East Side/South Panel***

Two colorful yellow and rust phoenix-like birds with yellow zinnia flowers and white vines are in the upper corners of the green surrounding background panel. A white vase displaying a bouquet of yellow and red flowers and twelve pink roses on their stems is set into a *mirab* shaped arch. Below the main panel are three green background square tile areas, with two white and one pink daisies set in a blue eight-petal flower, forming the base of the panel.

**Carved and Painted Wood Cornice and Fascia**

The Isfara Teahouse, constructed in 1992, has cornices, fascias, columns, ceiling coffers, and balusters that are typical to historical and contemporary Central Asian teahouses. These features have been part of buildings for hundreds of years. As a cultural expression they have been used over and over again

through time. New buildings are inspired by tradition, but they are not copies.

Tajik wood carvers, joiners, and painters still use the same techniques of their fathers and grandfathers, and the same basic images. Buildings have always been built a certain way that feels appropriate to the artisans and to the community. Styles may evolve over time, but the innovations are not abrupt. These traditional buildings feel comfortable and eternal to the people who use them.

The wood trim of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse is much like cornices and fascias that are found on many Central Asian buildings today, including as an example, the Isfara Teahouse. The brilliantly colored, hand-carved cornice, fascia and ceiling beams and coffers, as well as the naturally finished columns and balusters of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse are original and new and at the same time founded in very old traditions.



Fig.66 Isfara Teahouse, Tajikistan, Looking up at the painted Cornice, Fascia and ceiling coffers

Isfara Tourist Agency Photo

*Brilliant colors of yellow, red, blue and green and intricate floral and geometric patterns decorate every surface of the cornice, fascia, ceiling coffers and blend harmoniously to create a soothing environment in the Isfara Teahouse. Many of these design elements are found in the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse and in fact were constructed by the same artisans.*

The following two ceiling coffers of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse show similar bright colors and geometric patterns that are combined in different ways, compared to the coffer of the Isfara Teahouse, above. By changing the basic colors or design slightly, the design elements are unique to each building.

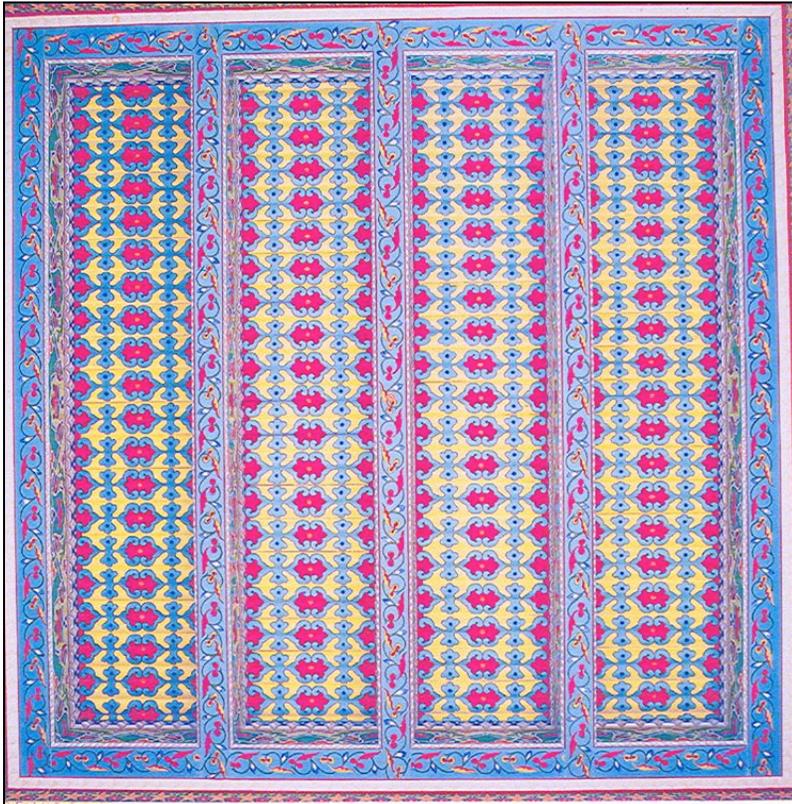


Fig.67. Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse coffer Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*This coffer with four divisions is simpler than its corresponding coffer in Isfara that has five. Colors of this coffer feature more pink than the Isfara ceiling coffers which have more green and red. (Fig. 66)*

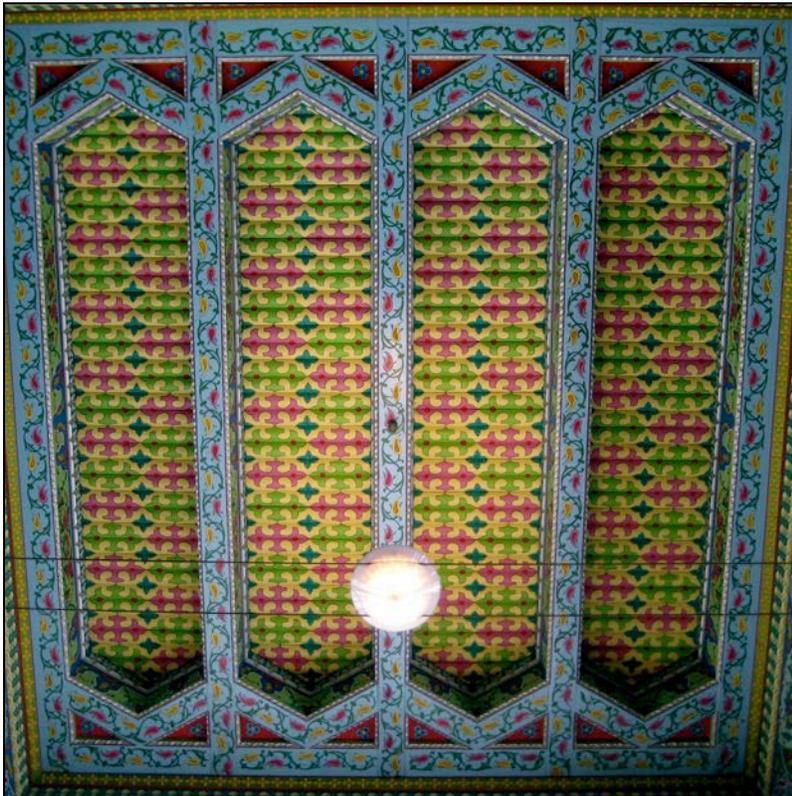


Fig.68 Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse, elaborate coffer Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*This coffer, with added angled decorative pieces, is a more elaborate design than what is found in Isfara.*

The cornice and fascia of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse show similar bright colors and geometric

patterns. Comparing them to the Isfara details we see the same colors used in different patterns.



Fig.69 Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse Fascia and Cornice above Front Door

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*Brackets supporting the cornice have different but similar patterns and colors that create a visually intriguing design.*

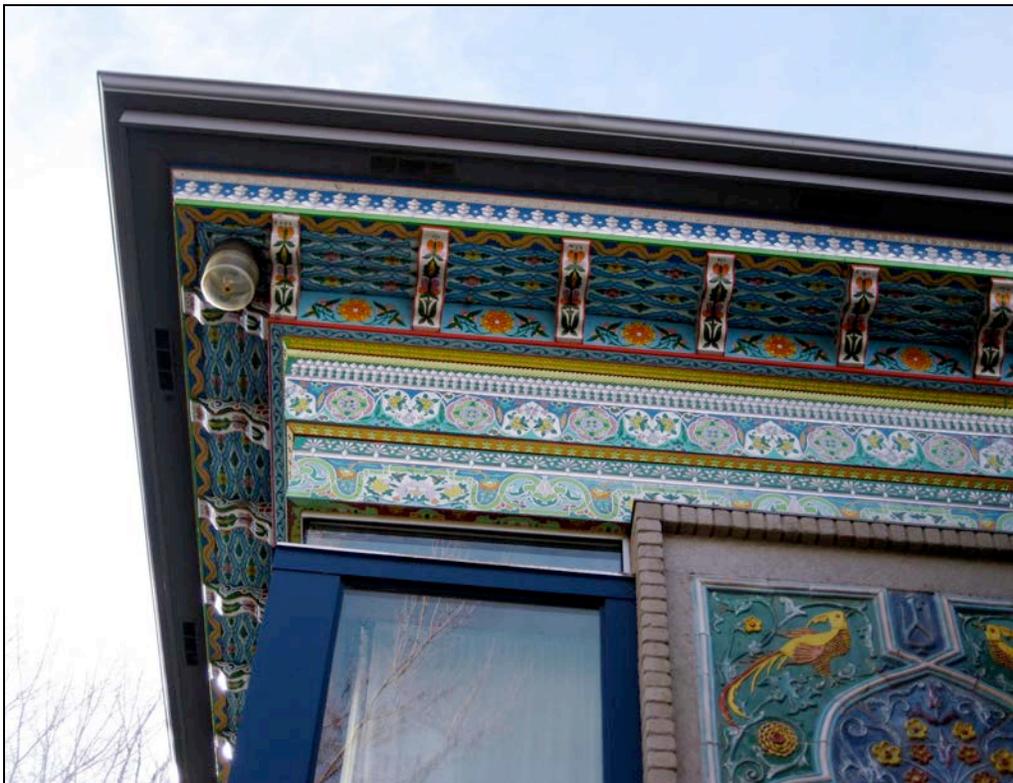


Fig.68 Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse, SE Corner Fascia and Cornice

Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo 2010

*Bright colors and floral and geometric patterns are found on the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse. The harmonious scale and intricacy of the decoration contribute to the restful feeling and appeal of the building.*

The naturally finished wood elements, columns and balustrade of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse are similar to those found at the Isfara Teahouse (see Fig. 66). At the same time, each column is completely unique.



Fig.71 Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse, Hand-carved wood columns and wood baluster Kathryn Barth, AIA, Photo, 2010  
*Morning sun shines through the south bay window of the Teahouse creating a serene view. The central column of the bay window and the balustrade are similar to those of the Isfara Teahouse.*