

# MIT List Center

## Kevin Roche

When the architects at Roche Dinkeloo and Associates set out to design the Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center, their challenge was to build a state-of-the-art athletic facility that also convened with MIT's architectural past. Sandwiched between the Stratton Student Center and the Johnson Athletic facility, the Z Center, as it's called, is also mere footsteps away from two of MIT's most iconic buildings, Eero Saarinen's Kresge Auditorium and MIT Chapel. No one was better suited for the job than Kevin Roche, who worked with Saarinen on Kresge Auditorium back in the 1950s.

We were, of course, very conscious of Eero's expectations for the site as a whole. And the question was how one connected two completely different-looking buildings. And how one would do that in such a way as to be complementary to the Kresge Auditorium and form a suitable background for it.

Roche and his team ultimately decided on a sleek glass and limestone facade that would allow the building, completed in 2000, to blend into the environment rather than overpower it.

The limestone refers to the early classical buildings across Massachusetts Avenue, which were limestone. One of the things that we were very interested in doing was to somehow create a building which would invite the students in. If they see the building illuminated from the inside, and they see all of these people on exercise machines, then maybe they get interested in going in. So it becomes an announcement and an invitation.

They left the fireworks for the inside of the building, where a stunning, Olympic-size swimming pool dominates the central corridor.

We had not too many opportunities for spectacle in this. But we did the best we could to make the pool the main feature. So it wasn't something that you discovered by opening a door later on in the building. So it's right there up front.

Framing the pool is an installation by artist Matthew Ritchie, called *Games of Chance And Skill*. You can hear more about it through the List's website.