IOWA Architect

Issue No. 11:274 Five Dollars

2010 DESIGN AWARDS

STATE AND REGION

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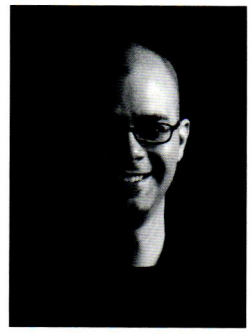
Photographer: Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions ©



This issue of Iowa Architect magazine is dedicated to the recipients of the Iowa Chapter and the Central States Region Design Awards. The awards program aims to encourage and recognize distinguished architectural achievement and focus the public's attention on the role of architecture in shaping the social and physical fabric of our communities through exemplary design.

As a volunteer for the AIA Iowa Awards Committee, I went to Boston to help facilitate the AIA Iowa Excellence in Design Awards jury, which was chaired by Robert Miklos, AIA, of designLAB. This year, 68 projects were submitted for the jury to consider. This issue highlights the seven projects recognized by the AIA Iowa Excellence in Design Awards and the four projects recognized by the AIA Iowa Excellence in Sustainable Design Awards.

Determining the seven AIA Iowa Excellence in Design Award recipients was a difficult task. All projects were reviewed as jurors began to determine how to critique and understand the work within a context. In the initial review, it was apparent that this year's submissions were not only modest in nature, but appeared to be completed within small budgets. Therefore, jurors focused on the clarity in planning and execution throughout the project—restraint not only in plan but also in detailing and material selection.

2010 DESIGN AWARDS STATE AND REGION

Each of the 68 submissions was judged on the basis of its design merit before the discussion focused on the top 21 projects selected for a more thorough review. These 21 projects were grouped relative to their scale and building type. This process allowed for debate about both individual merits and comparison among each project's peers. The final seven projects were reviewed to determine their award honor and to ensure that all of the projects awarded held up individually as well as in the group as a whole. We also determined whether each project, when compared to the others, met the high standard of quality design. In the end, the final seven projects produced four honor awards and three merit awards.

The jury had one last commentary about the projects submitted: They challenge designers to explore simpler, lower-budget solutions and use them to be inventive, experimental and creative in utilizing familiar materials and making the most of tight budgets.

Congratulations to this year's award recipients!

Joshua Baker, AIA
AIA Iowa Awards Committee

ADVOCACY
LEED EXCELLENCE, AIA IOWA CHAPTER OFFICE

FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA. ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS. ©

Above: Retreat, BNIM Architects.

DESIGN EXCELLENCE—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Excellence in design is the focus of AIA Iowa's annual awards program, the results of which are published in this issue. In addition, it is the unifying theme of every issue of *Iowa Architect*, as we seek to raise awareness about the value of excellent design, and it is a core component of the overall advocacy platform for AIA Iowa. But what exactly does "design excellence" mean? For this special issue, we asked two architects to share their thoughts on what defines excellence.

Excellence in Design
Thomas Leslie, AIA

If design is the clever application of resources to needs, as Charles and Ray Eames suggested, then excellent design has to do this in an extraordinary way. I think that excellence often has to do with how this balance is refined and expressed so that it goes beyond being just a "solution" and ends up being an experience. When we see the results of a truly fluent designer's work, it's often apparent that he or she has sifted through solutions to find not just the most effective solution, but one that balances efficiency with legibility. This concern for perception, for understanding, for the subjective experience, is something that is difficult to define, impossible to quantify or teach. It has to be learned empirically, through experimentation and constant discussion.

When that experience connects us perceptually with how a design works or how it's made, the designer has gone an extra step and connected us with their own efforts and those of the fabrication shop and the job site. This connects us with the efforts that go into any made or constructed product, and this didactic element tells us something not only about the design and the product but also about the physical and material realms that the design has been teased from. The American

philosopher John Dewey described this as an "aesthetic experience" that connected undergoing with doing. For him, the closer the resonance between these two aspects of human experience, the more vital or compelling the work of art.

To me, this process is most apparent in a strain of modernism that seeks to reveal the methods of its making and the logic behind its design. It is this interest in explaining or articulating the design and assembly processes that, I think, connects the otherwise disparate work of Scarpa and Kahn with, say, Rogers and Piano. Particularly in the thought given to details, to the expression of a hierarchy in which every piece has a logical, expressed place in the overall experience, these designers all show an interest in telling us about the design. There is extra thought and care given to showing us both how it was done and why it was done the way it was, and this connection to the designer's thought processes, and to the builder's constructive processes, is naturally engaging and interesting to a species that is distinguished by its ability to make things.

Thomas Leslie, AIA, is an Associate Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University. He is a frequent contributor to Iowa Architect.

What Does Design Excellence Mean To You?

Paul Mankins, FAIA

I have been involved in architecture for nearly 30 years now, and this is still a difficult question. Excellence, in almost anything that can't be judged with a stopwatch, is somewhat subjective. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder after all, and, with design in particular, there are the never-ceasing changes in taste, technology and the zeitgeist that impact our perceptions. In my view, however, there are some enduring qualities that can be found in all examples of truly excellent design.

The first of these qualities is directness—a design solution that is straightforward and not needlessly complicated. I believe that a truly excellent design solution is a direct, sensible reflection of the problem at hand. It isn't labored or clever—it elucidates rather than obfuscates. It is spectacularly functional and without pretense. This directness results in clarity of intention that is the hallmark of all excellent design.

The next quality is simplicity—a design solution that is pared down to its simplest terms. I realize that simplicity is often the natural by-product of directness, so I am being somewhat redundant, but simplicity is

Right: Stacey's Prom, Bridal & Lingerie, Invision Architecture.

Below: 322 Reinvented, Substance Architecture.

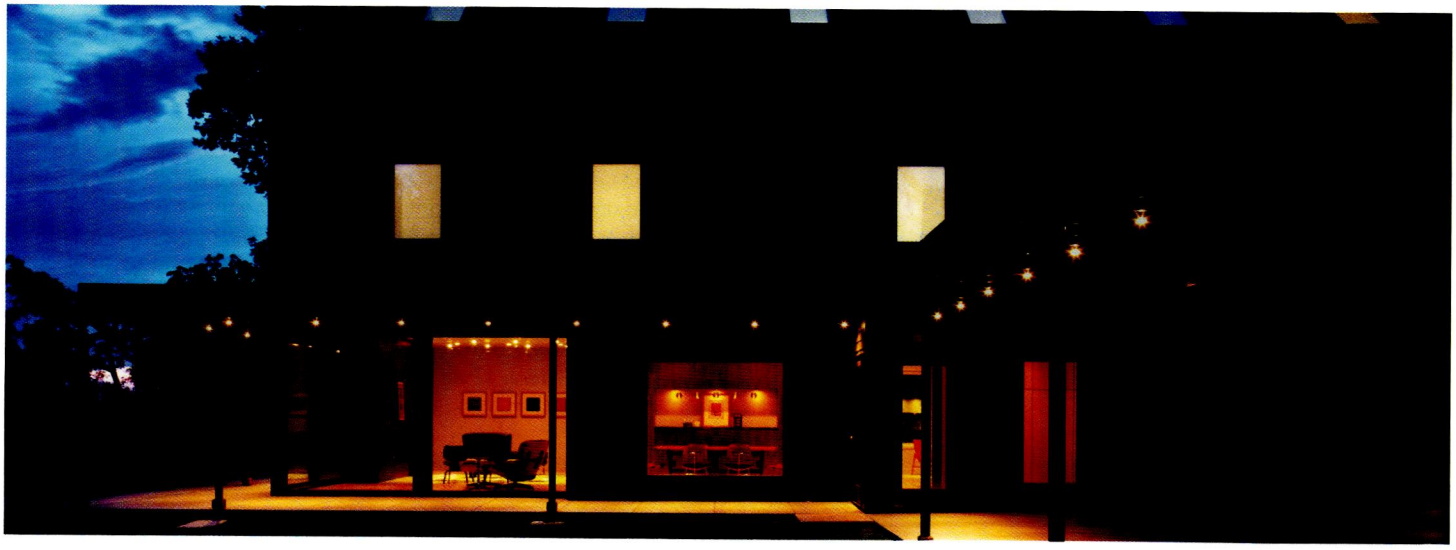
© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

an important quality in and of itself. The Franciscan philosopher William of Occam coined what he called "Occam's Razor"—the belief that the simplest explanation is more likely to be the best one. This fundamental principle of parsimony informs all great design. I am always struck by design work that elicits the response, "OMG, it can't be that simple." Simplicity, in design, is difficult. This may be an oxymoron, but it is also the truth.

The final quality, and perhaps the most difficult, is elegance—a design solution that is refined in appearance and precise. In most dictionaries elegance carries two distinct definitions. In the arts, elegance describes a level of refinement (an elegant dancer). In the sciences, elegance describes a level of precision (an elegant theorem). Design, by its nature, involves the careful balance of both. Design that is refined in its appearance and precise. And by precise I mean the result of a rigorous internal logic, is elegant. Elegant design results in something that "can't be any other way." It is complete.

If you review most design work judged as "excellent" this year, 20 years from now, or 20 years ago for that matter, I think you will find these three characteristics. They may or may not be trendy, but they will display these qualities. Their ability to endure as an example of design excellence—a piece of "classic design"—is directly tied to their directness, simplicity and elegance.

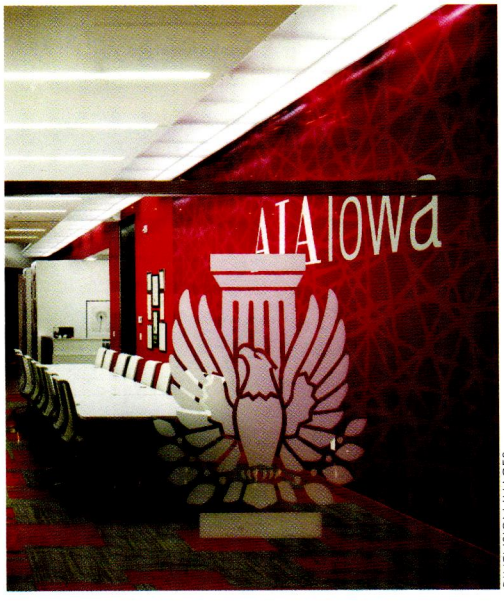
Paul Mankins, FAIA, is a principal at Substance Architecture. In the past 10 years, he has worked on at least 12 projects that have received AIA Design Excellence awards.



PAUL CROSBY

CONTRIBUTED BY RDG PLANNING & DESIGN STAFF:
MICHAEL ANDRESEN AND COLLIN BARNES

DIMENSION IMAGES



DIMENSION IMAGES

AIA IOWA CHAPTER OFFICE

When crafting performance-driven design for the tenant improvement market, the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED® for Commercial Interiors rating system is the measure by which you gauge success. To achieve LEED® Platinum certification—and to be the first project in your state to do so—would be a major accomplishment.

The American Institute of Architects Iowa Chapter, working in conjunction with RDG Planning & Design and Graham Construction, recently renovated the existing AIA Iowa Chapter office space to do just that. The completed LEED® Platinum project represents the organization's philosophy and commitment to cost-effective, industry leading design concepts while demonstrating a strong dedication to sustainable, high-performance interiors that are not only pleasing to the eye, but are also productive, healthy places to work.

Covering a modest 2,300 square feet, the newly renovated floor plan encompasses an open and flexible design that functions as a hub for social, educational and promotional events as well as efficient administrative office space. The carpet boasts recycled content, and the cork flooring is a rapidly renewable resource. Additional components include the use of FSC certified wood, low-flow faucets, Greenguard Certified furnishings and repurposed casework salvaged from the previous office space. By incorporating daylighting, energy-efficient lighting fixtures and an HVAC system that is designed to perform 35

DIMENSION IMAGES

percent more efficiently than current state energy codes, the AIA Iowa office is a very stylish, modern, eco-friendly work environment that would make any organization proud.

The employees at the AIA Iowa Chapter office have benefited in many ways since moving into their new space. Each workstation is positioned so workers have views to the exterior, overlooking Des Moines' Nollen Plaza. To further enhance employee comfort and well-being, a strategic ergonomic plan was implemented to ensure each employee has the ability to complete their everyday tasks safely and comfortably. This strategy awarded the project an additional point for Innovation of Design. The site's urban location promotes a healthier lifestyle for walking and bicycling to work, and, with close proximity to public transportation, patrons are granted the opportunity to minimize their own personal carbon footprint on the environment.

As a finishing touch, the team installed a Web-based kiosk in the lobby. This feature is intended to encourage public interaction between the organization and the profession it serves. The kiosk shows in-depth information about the process of integrated project delivery as well as details regarding the sustainable choices that went into designing this spectacular, award-winning space.

The project's limited budget was significantly augmented by member-donated funds and donations of time and materials from generous AIA Iowa Allied members. In this design effort, there really was no stone left unturned. On behalf of the design team and AIA Iowa staff, we'd like to thank the following contributors for their participation in this project: Steelcase; Workspace, Inc.; Teknion; Koch Brothers; Graham Construction; USG; Oharco; Quality Automation Graphics; Baker Group; Shaw Contract Group; Sunderland Brothers; Baker Electrical; Beeline and Blue; and Renewable Choice Energy. Without their generosity and commitment to sustainable practices, we would not have had the opportunity to achieve such a merit.

DIMENSION IMAGES

ALTERNATIVES

BY MAX MAHAFFEY

Potent Space

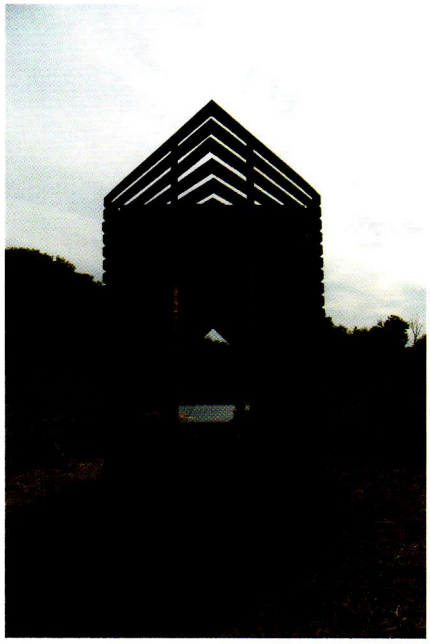
"... Emptiness may resound without sound, may be filled by its potential to be filled, and make open what is complete ..."[1]

In all of our experiences, every once in a while, we encounter those rare places that have a profound effect upon our lives. Thinking back on those places, it is easy to remember details about the way the light cast shadows on a form or how a certain material felt against the palms of our hands. We remember the feelings of excitement or contentment aroused in us when we occupy these spaces. They are the potent spaces of our lives.

We remember the corncribs—the weathered red paint on the wooden slats; the diagonal streams of light flooding the interior spaces; the crossing wood members supporting its decaying roof; the refuse of the birds and rodents who passed through before us. The crib belongs in these Midwest landscapes.

We remember the temples—the faded wooden floorboards beneath our bare feet, creaking as we softly move from one space to another; the sliding partitions that seem to open up the surrounding gardens. The emptiness in the atmosphere allows nature to fill our thoughts.

There is a place in our memories reserved for the vernacular and the sacred. The field chapel is an exercise in this kind of potency—somewhere in between Iowan and Japanese sensibilities.



As a native of suburban Chicago, it took me a few years to understand the appeal of Iowa's vast, treeless prairies. The frequent trips to and from school along I-80 certainly didn't help my opinion of them. It wasn't until I spent time out in the fields, walking for miles at my own pace, that I began to understand. The allure is in the horizontal grandeur. "People neglect prairies as scenery because they require time and patience to comprehend," writes Bill Holm.[2]

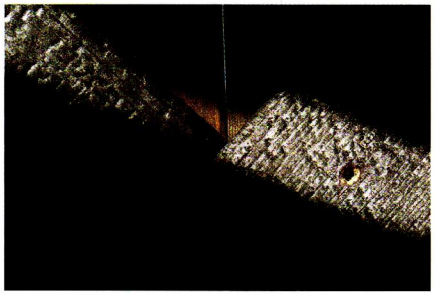
Once you begin to appreciate these agrarian landscapes, you begin to see details where other people just see grass. You begin to see the subtle changes in topography. And you begin to forget about everything outside of where you are at that particular moment.

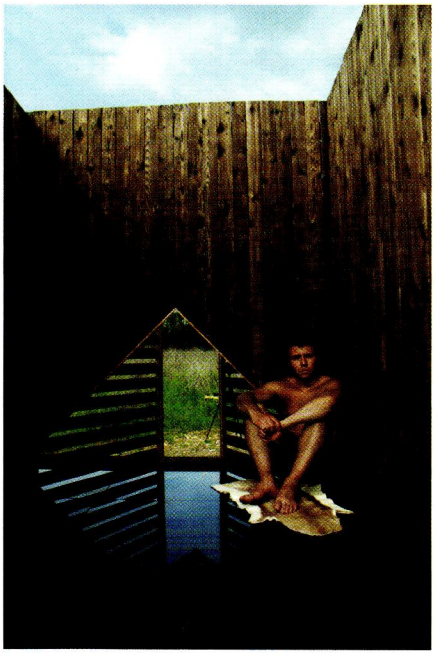
Still, there is something to be said for the quiet and the emptiness so prevalent in Iowa that is much more than simply relief from an increasingly urbanized society. Face to face with an empty field, a farmer sees opportunity. Confronted with the same field, what does a designer, artist or architect see?

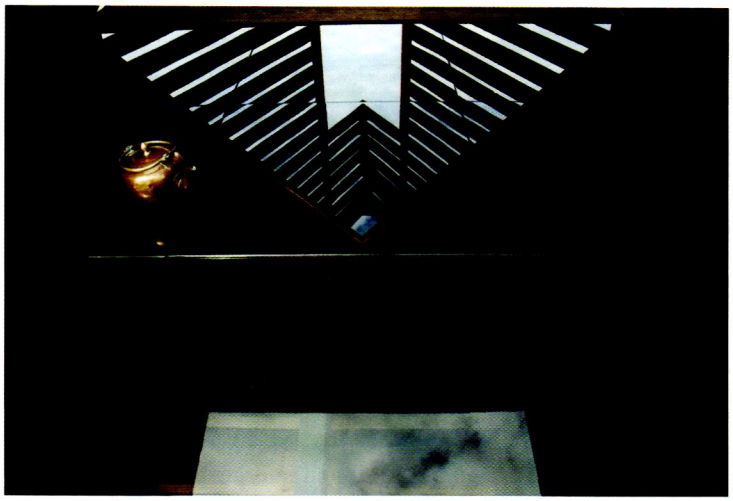
As designers it is our job to perpetuate the potential we see in emptiness. The difficulty in inserting something into such an austere landscape is that we run the risk of only seeing the intervention. We require a clear mind and restraint to create something that is about its environment.

The chapel is intended to encourage reflection and evoke a spirit of inquiry. It is a slow space. Throughout the design process we resisted the prescriptive processes typical of our education. In lieu of orthogonal drawings, we made small haphazard mock-ups and kept our drawings brief and gestural. Through these gestures, the act of making came into focus.

In constructing the space, we engaged in a labor



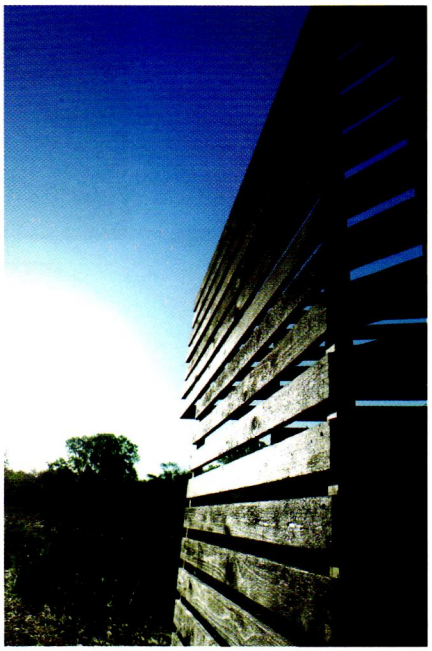




that gave us our own time for reflection. The process of torching and cleansing the cedar became a medium through which we could approach the more oblique aspects of architecture. Our haptic responses to the burnt wood informed our actions as we aimed to construct an honest space.

While working, we often listened to jazz, and this had a profound impact on us. Not weighed down by visions of resolution, the music is free to evolve, shift and change. At its core, jazz is built from rules and order, but its richness arises in its deviations.

We find beauty in the ephemeral, the intimate, the humble and the imperfect.



In the Midwest, we are fortunate to have four distinct seasons. As the seasons change, the weather will take its toll. And somewhere between the corncribs and the temples, when it's no longer there, we hope you will remember our chapel.

[The aforementioned field chapel project is the result of a design-build independent studio by Max Mahaffey (B.Arch '10) and Brian Moore (B.Arch '10), under the direction of Pete Gochè. It currently sits on Westbrook Artists' Site in Winterset, Iowa. It was funded in part by the Iowa State University Foundation.]

[1] Benedikt, Michael. *For an Architecture of Reality* (New York: Lumen Books, 1987).
[2] Holm, Bill. "Horizontal Grandeur" in *The Music of Failure* (Prairie Grass Press, 1990).

AWARD

AIA IOWA HONOR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Prairie Jewel Box

LONG LIFE, LOOSE FIT

JURY COMMENTS: Almost residential in scale, this institutional rural retreat was a unanimous favorite of jurors: simple, elegant, consistent, absolute conceptual clarity. Represented one of the strongest relationships between site and building of projects submitted: simple form oriented toward view and exposure, lifted above a 70-acre restored prairie. Recalls the tradition of Midwestern barns but clearly contemporary and reductive in form and language. Ironically, it avoids any structural expression typical of barns. Simple arrangement of spaces dominate. Beautiful palette of recycled wood skin inside and out, placed on a concrete base. Looks effortless, but a lot of care and work to achieve that level of simplicity. Jurors very much appreciated its stylistic attitude. Project will endure for many years.

Serving as a meeting place for family and business gatherings, a client and architect have composed a building with sustainable simplicity situated within a restored bucolic prairie landscape.

Right: A simple and minimal form is placed upon a restored Iowa prairie, expressing the ideal of living in harmony with nature. The abstract gable form evokes agrarian typology and connects the rural landscape with prairie grasses planted up to the perimeter.

Below left: All service and support areas are enclosed on the ground floor for maximum space utilization. The airy social gathering spaces on the upper floor are organized between two exterior decks, with a generous main living area anchored on the west by guest rooms, a bathroom, and antique bar, and a kitchen and dining area along the east end.

Below right: Steel moment frames at each end tie together the trusses, allowing for no load-bearing interior walls on the open second floor with expansive views in all directions. Extensive use of reclaimed wood reiterates the sustainable aspect of this remarkable but simple design.

Project: Midwest Retreat
Location: Rural Iowa
Architect: BNIM Architects
General Contractor: W.R. Main Contractor
Electrical Contractor: MPT Electric
Structural Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering
Photographer: Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions ©

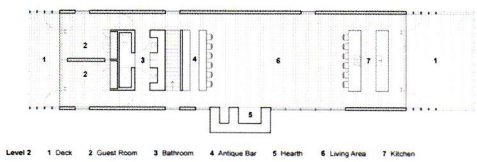
MARK E. BLUNCK

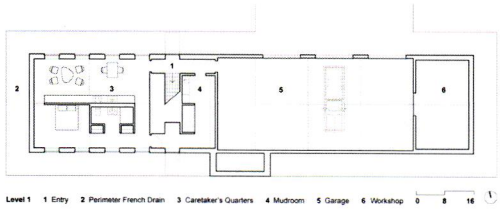
An enlightened client has expressed his appreciation for native Iowa prairie with the acquisition of 700 acres of rolling hills and fallow farmland. The Department of Natural Resources assisted in the selection and planting of vegetation to complement the Midwest Retreat sited in an existing clearing. The retreat serves as a peaceful oasis for family members, friends and business associates to enjoy the solitude and open spaces isolated from the cacophony of our modern harried culture.

BNIM Architects is noted for its commitment to sustainable design and construction. Jonathan Ramsey, AIA, LEED AP, has created a pleasant rural abstract form with simplicity and sustainability as the primary consideration. The architecture displays minimal modulation with few projections or recesses, and resembles buildings seen in the work of artist Ralston Crawford. Think of Worth Steel Plant, 1936, in the Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections.

Sustainability is the concept for the vast acreage surrounding this retreat and informs the design and construction methods. Ramsey noted the need for "a building that was highly durable, with low maintenance and a simple form with no pits or valleys for rain and snow to build up." Since the retreat is utilized only intermittently, the required materials had to function with minimal attention or upkeep for extended periods.

FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS ©





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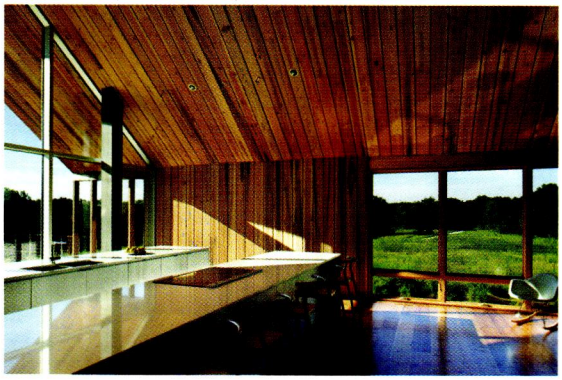
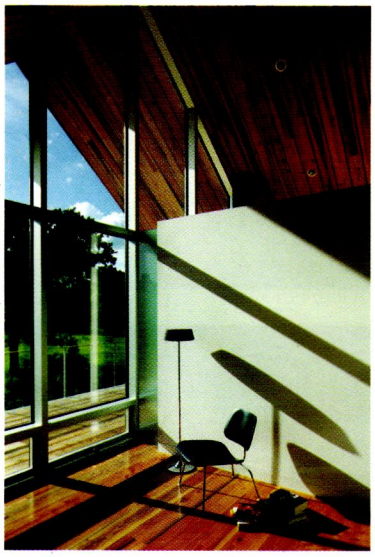


FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS ©

The overall building composition is a steep gable roof constructed of reflective galvanized steel sitting atop two levels of concrete and wood clad walls. While the east and west ends are shaded by steel supported eight foot overhangs for morning and afternoon sun protection, this shading detail is minimal along the north and south elevations. This eliminated the need for soffits and the potential moisture issues associated with that element. It was absolutely essential that the building envelope design and materials had to be simple and uncomplicated to avoid the damaging effects of moisture infiltration. Mark Main of W.R. Main Contractor said, "Minor details for minimalist architecture look nebulous but take time and patience to look perfect."

The program directive for the second-level social gathering space was open flexibility. This has been achieved with a minimal number of interior walls that do not reach ceiling height, enabling maximum views and natural ventilation. The client desired the incorporation of three elements—an open kitchen, a previously acquired antique bar and a fireplace—to be situated to enhance views in all directions. An important decision was made to shift the fireplace to an exterior wall, allowing an open sight line across the entire central space. The two multi-use guest rooms at the west serve as sleeping areas, office space and exercise room, and their open nature is expressed by semi- and fully private restroom functions.

Reclaimed Douglas fir was selected for exterior cladding and for interior floors, walls and ceilings. The beautiful 100-year-old wood was originally sourced from a train trestle near the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Since the salt environment preserved the wood for generations, no artificial stains or preservatives were needed for interior or exterior application. A two-fold problem was solved as no new wood was required and no toxic solvents were necessary for weather protection in Iowa's harsh climate. To come full circle with the simplicity and sustainability concept, the building utilizes a geothermal energy system for nearly all heating and cooling needs. This particular design consists of horizontal coils a mere 12 to 20 feet below the surface in 250 foot loops.



FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS ©

This is a proposal for the state government to reduce global warming. For every 700 acres of farmland that are taken out of production and restored to prairie, let's celebrate with a retreat building.

—*"Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just sit down and do the work." After 23 years of freelance writing, Mark E. Blunck, Hon. AIA Iowa, now understands the creative process as expressed by artist Chuck Close.*

Above: The contrast of concrete, limestone, reclaimed Douglas fir and galvanized steel forms a separation of building functions with support spaces on the concrete-enclosed ground floor and open social areas on the wood-clad second floor. A French drain filled with local limestone facilitates rain and snow removal and makes an unsightly gutter system unnecessary.

Left: The open interior plan extends throughout the space with the reclaimed wood floor and ceiling providing a subtle contrast with the white partition walls. This serves as a picture frame to admire the natural art of the renewed prairie landscape.

AWARD

AIA IOWA HONOR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

322

SHELL AND OTHER BITS ORDINARY

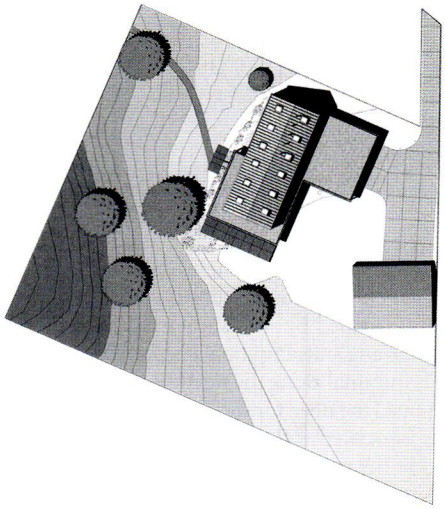
JURY COMMENTS: Radical transformation of the suburban development house type. New transparency throughout the ground floor creates strong connection to site, taking advantage of mature landscape setting. Abstraction of basic house form very successful. Not much dialogue between old and new. In fact, jurors wondered why existing house wasn't just torn down to start over. Felt the project held up just as well if a new building. Questioned the tectonics of the wrap-around porch—thin columns on blocks with heavy roof framing. All in all a strong project that explores a new model for the suburban house.

In the domain of architecture, in which realization seems to employ decisions that derive from utility and rejoin obligations of the world of aesthetics, the makeover of a house can reveal the first commitment of a firm's oeuvre.

"Located in an established residential neighborhood in Iowa City, Iowa, the existing home was built in 1941 and subsequently expanded several times, resulting in a warren of small rooms with no overall sense of organization. It is situated on a large site surrounded by mature trees. Providing a greater sense of connection to this landscape was a central theme for the renovation." —Substance, project brief

We awake each morning and instantaneously are aware of all that is about. This mindfulness is solidified by the adoption of a horizontal posture. The idea that lying down is something natural is quite naïve. In this prostrate embodiment of space, we are caused to comprehend or mentally map the position of the doors and windows, the arrangement of furniture and the configuration of other bits of ordinary (bed linens and sinks and drawers and bath and a fly orbiting a recessed lamp). The daily resurrection of this room and our bodily presence varies according to the diurnal milieu that seeps through apertures in the shell or building envelope. Essential to inducing this wakeful moment is the presence of natural light and, perhaps, the accompaniment of a crow's caw.

In this particular case, the home's existing punched windows were replaced and their rhythm extended to order the home's fenestration—even the new skylights follow this strict cadence. Project Architect Matt Rodekamp notes, "This regulated window pattern was deliberate … to open up and expose views from the private living and dining rooms to the yard beyond, while limiting public view back into these spaces." The result is a simple, almost archetypal geometry reminiscent of a utilitarian aesthetic emblematic of 20th century regional vernacular buildings.



Left: The traditional 1940s house, before renovation.

Right: Site plan shows the arrangement of the building and trees.

Below: Side view of new residential shell: tongue-and-groove Douglas fir siding, cement siding with aluminum reveal trim, standing-seam metal roof, Pella windows and doors and VELUX Skylights.

PAUL CROSBY

Project: 322 Reinvented
Location: Iowa City, IA
Architect: Substance Architecture
General Contractor: Amelon Construction
Structural Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering
Photographer: Paul Crosby

PETER P. GOCHÉ

Below: View of utility mass—shower, vanity and headboard.

PAUL CROSBY

PAUL CROSBY

PAUL CROSBY

Within, the addition of a bedroom suite is a smaller version of the spatial configuration employed on the first level with a utility mass (shower/vanity/headboard) situated off-center of a single, vast, open space. This spatial inscription is cloaked in a chromatic absence (white) that renders the color spectrum of natural light throughout the day. Just outside, the shell operates quite simply as an environmental envelope through which natural light and ventilation are allowed.

The concept that corresponds to a shell is so clear, so hard and so sure that we are arrested in the architect's skillfully polished value of geometrical realities of form. As stated by Paul Valéry in his essay, "Les coquillages" (Shells), "A crystal, a flower, or a shell stands out from the usual disorder that characterizes most perceptible things. They are privileged forms that are more intelligible for the eye, even though more mysterious for the mind, than all the others we see indistinctly." For this architect, whose thinking is essentially Cartesian, a shell seems to have been a truth of well-solidified geometry, and therefore clear and distinct. As Rodekamp suggests, "The result was a solution that relies on formal convention rather than invention to blur the line between what is new and what is old." For the reinvented object is highly understood as part of and separate from the collective canon of balloon-framed housing stock here in the Midwest.

—Peter Goché is an artist, architect and adjunct professor native to Iowa.

Above: End view of the new residential shell and wrap-around porch.

Bottom left: Remodeled attic space and new skylight windows.

AWARD

AIA IOWA HONOR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Say Yes to the Building!

CREATIVITY + INNOVATION = A DISTINCTIVE STRUCTURE

JURY COMMENTS: Much debate about this projects: at first glace appears as an ordinary retail development project. In fact, it is very clever, very intelligent. A complete re-invention and reconsideration of the type. Shop windows elevated on ordinary box creating showcase displays at scale of roadway—no signage required—also operate as light monitors, illuminating warehouse within. Retail arrangement is an industrial warehouse filled with racks of dresses with continuous dressing rooms at perimeter, a runway as elevated catwalk above, providing a completely different shopping experience. Jurors commended the architects for taking on a project type rarely approached as good design, cleverly dealing with the restraints. Project built for a remarkable $100/SF and serves as a model and inspiration for what can be achieved in the forgotten strip mall landscape.

How does an architect go about designing a structure that is flexible for future use, meets different buyers' needs and experiences, holds 5,300 prom and bridal dresses at any given time and also provides personal attention to the customer? Oh, and by the way, it can't look like a box.

With an irregular-shaped building site and steep sloping banks located 12 feet below grade level, Stacey Fox, the owner of Stacey's Prom, Bridal and Lingerie presented all of these needs and challenges to INVISION Architecture. How could a distinctive structure be designed and built in a mundane environment of box stores and strip malls? The architects would need an uncommon solution for a difficult site, with the added caveat of how could the structure be divided into four different businesses in the future, but not be noticeable today?

These seemingly insurmountable problems were beautifully resolved by INVISION. Approaching the building, a person is immediately struck by the windows that are not at ground level in the front, but instead overhang the building at a higher level. They are expansive and excellent for displaying merchandise that can be seen from a distance. Walking inside takes customers to a whole new world of dresses. To the left of the entrance are walls of display area, essential for the retail business—an abundance of natural light, lots of fitting rooms and space for thousands of prom dresses. The design allows customers to have varied choices in an area that is easily accessible with free-standing mirrors outside of the dressing rooms. In a more private area in this same large space are the wedding gowns. This area is smaller with comfortable seating for the bride's guests, plus a large platform and mirror for viewing.

© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

Below: Exterior lighting and elevated window beautifully highlights an elegant dress fro Stacey's

Right: The interior view of dressing rooms with the elevated window that showcases merchandise from two views - the back of the dress for customers inside, and the front of the dress for those passing by.

© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

On the right-hand side of the store, one finds a calmer and quieter atmosphere. The space here is smaller and more intimate. This is the area for lingerie and special lingerie, such as for women needing fittings after a mastectomy.

The biggest unseen surprise, which was one of the requirements Stacey wanted for future use, is hidden under the three large windows. Under these windows and behind the walls below, are entrance doors. The space can be divided into three distinct and separate spaces for new businesses, if that is ever needed. Add a dividing wall and open the doors, and there's a place for a new business. The viewer would never know by looking at the outside or viewing from the inside that this well-planned building was designed with the future in mind.

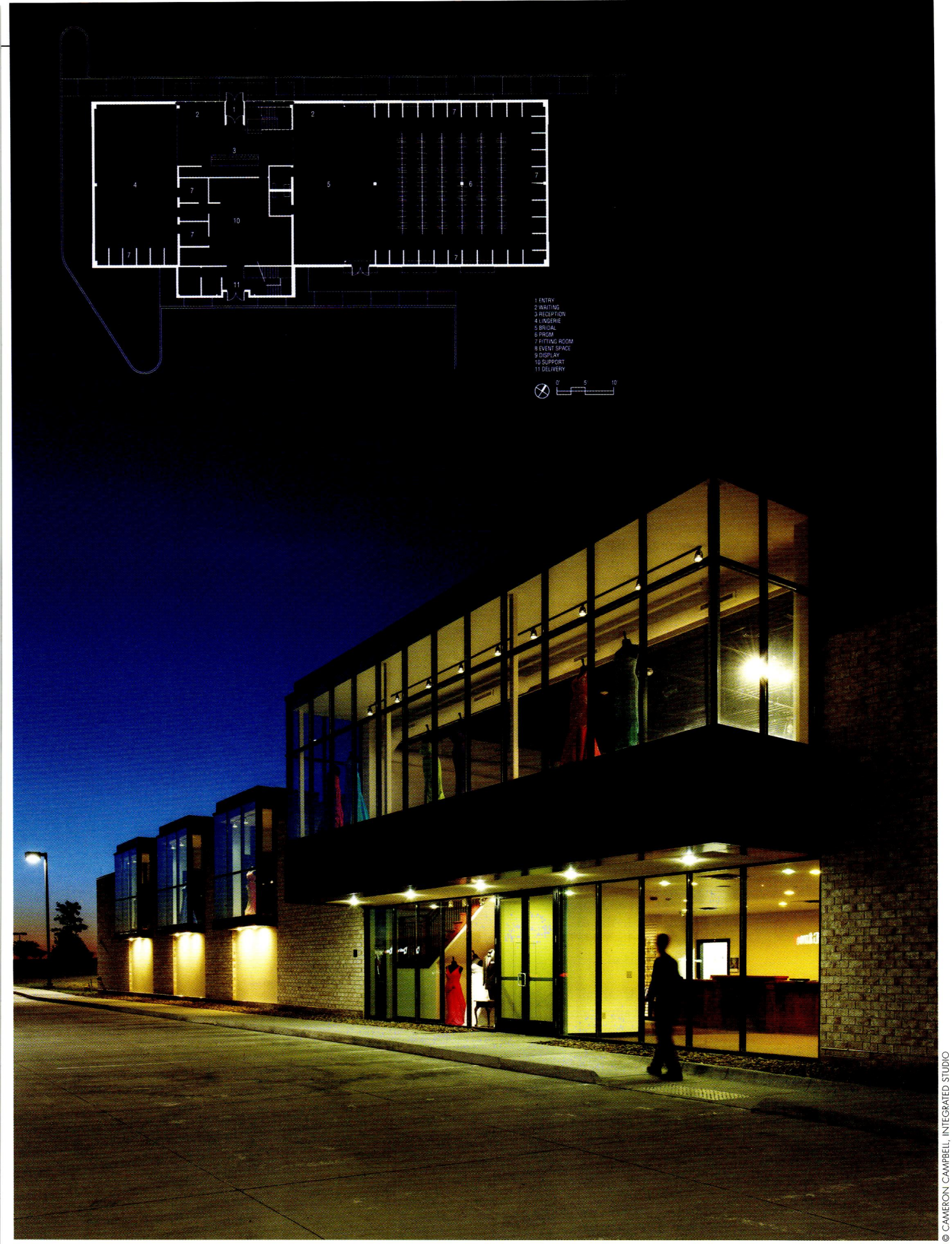
There are even more surprises upstairs. The area is expansive, with large ground-level windows so it can be readily used by the community for meetings, trunk shows or other events.

This building is the ultimate in versatility, and proves once again the collaborative, fast-paced, creative effort between an entrepreneurial client and architect can achieve winning results. This new structure is the complete package and is only missing a bow on the roof.

—Susan M. Koenig-VandeHaar, BFA, MSE teaches art and lives in Des Moines.

Project: Stacey's Prom, Bridal & Lingerie
Location: Urbandale, IA
Architect: Invision Architecture
Interior Design: INVISION planning | architecture | interiors
General Contractor: Ball Construction Services, LLC
Civil Engineer: Civil Engineering Consultants
MEP Engineer: Design Build
Structural Engineer: Tometich Engineering, Inc.
Photographer: © Cameron Campbell, Integrated Studio

SUSAN M. KOENIG-VANDEHAAR



Above: The distinctive windows that make Stacey's an area landmark.

AWARD

AIA IOWA HONOR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Setting the Stage for Multiculturalism

STUDENTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND ARCHITECTS FIND COMMON GROUND

JURY COMMENTS: The reuse is skillfully done and elegant in its detail, but jurors were looking for a new interpretation of the theme and idea rather than an adaptation.

Iowa State University's Multicultural Center is not just another Memorial Union remodel. This vibrant new space creates new opportunities for engagement with diversity on campus.

Tameka Green, now a graphic designer in Missouri, got involved with the Iowa State University Multicultural Center in the Memorial Union during her freshman year. After participating in many programming and design review sessions with students, university administrators, Memorial Union staff and HLKB Architecture, she held her 2008 graduation party in the recently opened space. "It was a great way to end my career at ISU … I loved how it turned out." Green is not alone in her admiration of the results. Students, ISU officials and architects all agree that the carefully studied remodeling of an area vacated by the Alumni Association is extraordinary.

The project created a common place for several ISU student groups that had been loosely organized under Minority Student Affairs but headquartered in various locations. Each group had its own ideas about how this new space should represent them. The brilliant functional organization and masterful detailing of the Multicultural Center makes the successful resolution of many diverse agendas seem effortless. Kirk Blunck of HLKB Architecture says the design process required listening carefully to the students and helping them move past their disparate expectations. The result, he thinks, serves more as "a backdrop for the diverse groups at the table" than as a synthesis of their initial notions.

While Blunck admits that this aesthetic approach suits his firm's work in general, in this case it was an especially useful strategy. And the project allowed opportunities to use some of their favorite oversized maple-veneered panels in both barn-door and pivot-hinged applications. The details demanded excellent craftsmanship. Good communication between designers and contractor allowed this project to meet everyone's expectations.

For Richard Reynolds, director of the ISU Memorial Union, the Multicultural Center is more than a first-rate example of interior architecture. The design process created a sense of common purpose among the students that continues to characterize the new Multicultural Student Programming Advisory Council of the Office of Multicultural Students Affairs (formerly Minority Student Affairs). Consequently, what might have been nothing more than neutral territory to be negotiated and scheduled, now serves as a lively nexus for everyone at ISU, not just minorities.

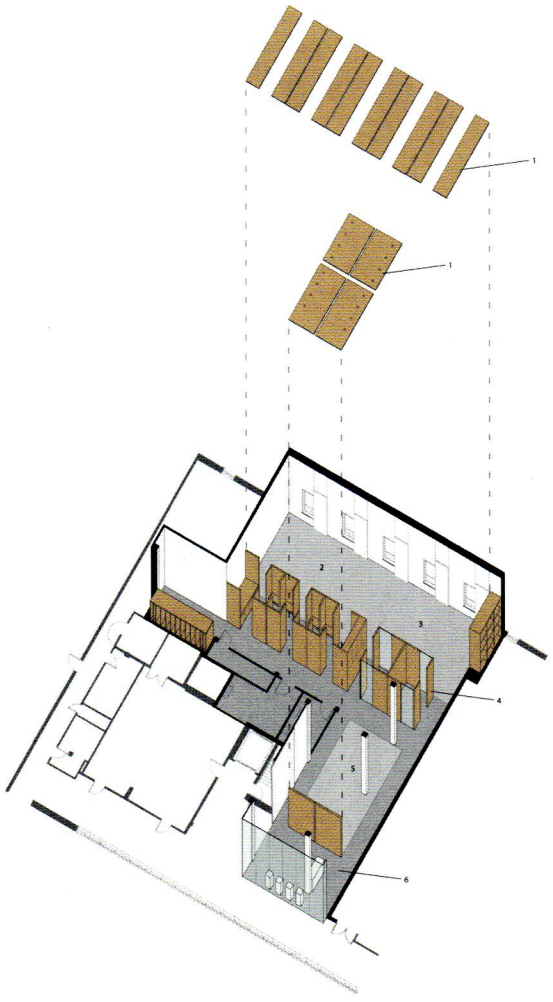
Administrators and staff involved were occasionally dubious about elements of the design, but they did not object

Right: The chalkboard wall animates the interior corridor.

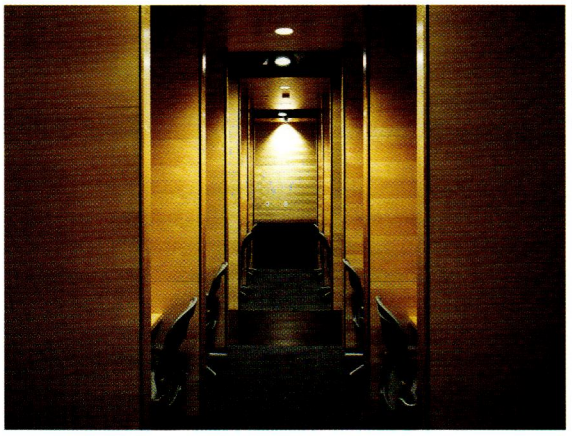
© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

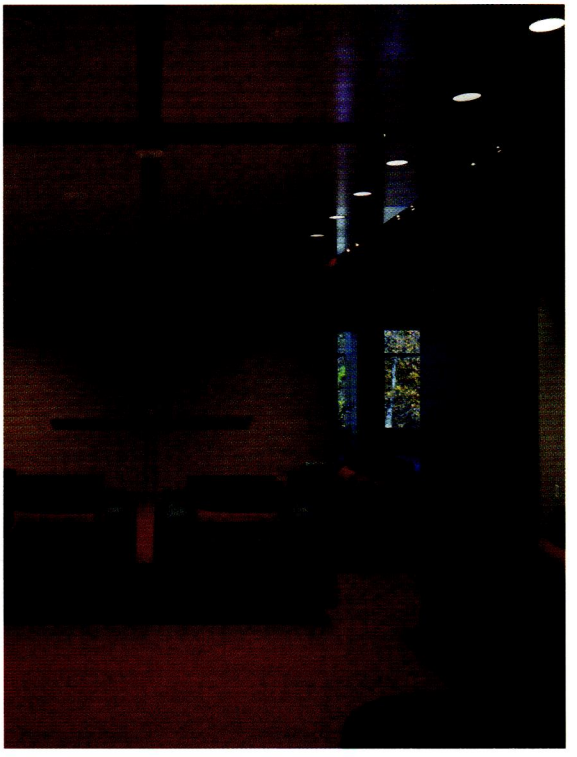
Project Name: Iowa State University Multicultural Center
Location: Ames, IA
Architect: HLKB Architecture
General Contractor: Pike Construction
Electrical Contractor: Alvine and Associates
Interior Designer: HLKB Architecture
Photographer: © Cameron Campbell, Integrated Studio

CLARE CARDINAL-PETT



1. WOOD CEILING CLOUD
2. MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
3. LIBRARY
4. STUDY ALCOVES
5. LOUNGE
6. RECEPTION





Left: Key functional elements of the ISU Multicultural Center include spaces for meetings, meditation and studying. The center also displays student artwork. Oversized lockers allow students to hang out for long periods of time without having to keep track of coats, backpacks and portfolios. A small kitchenette is located just off the interior corridor. The multipurpose room can be divided into three smaller spaces.

Right: View from the library, through one of two private study and reflection rooms into the lounge and the Memorial Union hallway beyond. The design makes good use of exterior views and all available daylight.

Below left: A series of study carrels is tucked inside the scheme.

Below right: View from the lounge through the main entry and into the Memorial Union hallway. The center is opened and closed with big barn doors, creating a unique welcome.

when the students seemed enthusiastic. Several times they found themselves saying, "It's their space, so let's let it go." And rightfully so: The project was primarily funded by a student fee established by the Government of the Student Body under the leadership of then-president Angela Groe.

This respectful relationship between students and administrators also helped make the client-architect relationship a valuable educational experience for students. Tameka Green is very proud of her contributions—especially the large chalkboard wall for messages, spontaneous artwork and graffiti—that she says was her "big thing."

"This had to happen," she said. The chalkboard is the center's fundamental backdrop, a real-time display of multicultural interaction and coexistence.

—Clare Cardinal-Pett, Associate Professor of Architecture, Iowa State University.

AWARD

AIA IOWA MERIT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Let There Be Natural Light

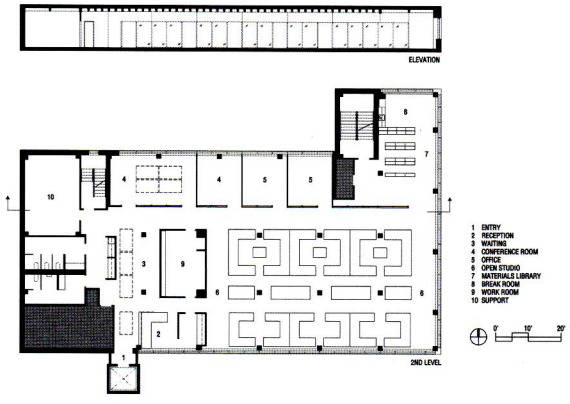
AN OPEN SPACE FOR THE DESIGN PROCESS

JURY COMMENTS: Another project that embraces the industrial heritage of the region-this project—with minimal means—creates an edgy loft-like studio environment out of the shell of an anonymous office building. It favors the honesty of expression by revealing the existing concrete construction at the exposed ceiling, and the evidence of earlier use at the raw concrete floor. The exposed surfaces contrast with refined and elegant details of metal and glass for the new insertions. Jurors appreciated the simple, logical plan and its careful fit with the existing structure—understated yet elegant.

INVISION desired a space where teams could collaborate in an open environment. The expanse has the added benefit of natural daylight streaming in from three sides.

Twenty people. One room with desks. No partitions. Aspiring to foster an open and collaborative design process like the studio culture to which architecture students become accustomed, the INVISION staff gravitated to an atmosphere that encourages interaction. "We know when one group is charretting on a project, and we know when one person is discussing construction details on the phone with a contractor," said Tom Feldmann, Associate AIA. "Staff on different projects offer suggestions on details for each other's projects and discuss construction solutions on other projects."

With about three times more space to work in, the new expanse will allow for growth. "We were moving from a walk-up office in Valley Junction that was approximately 1,600 square feet (with 10 staff), and needed plenty of extra room," said Feldmann. "Our new office is approximately 6,000 square feet."



Substantially larger than the former offices, when the new space was first considered, it was loaded with partitions eight feet tall or taller and created a barrier that sealed off most occupants from a long window to the outside world. After removing the obstruction, the way was clear to use the natural daylight as the primary source of light for the newly renovated space. With windows all around, the studio culture is alive and illuminated with ideas.

"The Des Moines office for INVISION was an interesting challenge to photograph because of its wonderful quality of light in the open office space," said Cameron Campbell, Integrated Studio photographer. "The challenge was to capture the open feel of the office in the photographs by responding to how it was organized as well as the connection to the outdoors." In order to foster collaboration, the designers necessarily desired a systemized space. The result is confident cooperation between individuals and teams as the inventive process unfolds.

The project progressed from June to October in 2005. Construction and furnishings cost about $118,000. The INVISION offices are on the second floor of a 1943 edifice.

© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

Left: The layout incites collaboration between individuals and design teams.

Right: New elements were combined with some adapted for new uses. The floor was sealed and carpet installed to help dampen sound.

Opposite page:
Above: With glass on three sides, the space borrows light from outside, which on some days eliminates the need for artificial illumination.

Below: With room to grow, the staff at INVISION is at home in their new space.

The existing electrical, fire protection and mechanical systems were maintained. To address sustainability issues and reduce costs and construction waste, as many materials as possible from the demolition process were reused, including casework, clear-grain cedar framing and mill-finish steel sheeting, among other items.

The plan for growth brings with it the need or desire for changes. The original plan called for 12 desks, which turned to 20. According to Feldmann, because it's an architectural office, the space continues to be refined. New signage has been added and as well as display shelves in the lobby. Plans are also underway to add a door system to the linear glass wall.

As a collective design endeavor, the occupants are content with the outcome. The luxury of the space rests with its austerity. The mix of materials, including new and those adapted for reuse, coalesce in the same way as the teams of architects who function in the space each day.

—M. Monica Gillen lives and works in Ames.

Project: INVISION
Des Moines Office
Location: Des Moines, IA
Architect: INVISION
planning | architecture | interiors
General Contractor: INVISION
planning | architecture | interiors
Electrical Contractor:
Baker Electric
Interior Designer: INVISION
planning | architecture | interiors
Photographer: © Cameron Campbell, Integrated Studio

M. MONICA GILLEN

© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

© CAMERON CAMPBELL, INTEGRATED STUDIO

AWARD

AIA IOWA MERIT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Room with a View

SWANK URBAN LIVING

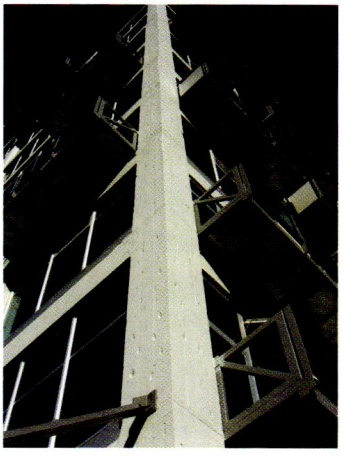
JURY COMMENTS: A model project for urban redevelopment on the industrial fringe. Intelligent reuse of the concrete frame industrial building: all solid infill panels were removed for maximum transparency and to reveal the frame. Jurors appreciated the metal boxes randomly plugged into structural bays as balconies, inspired by industrial equipment or catwalks. They create a dynamic dialogue between the old and new industrial aesthetic. Jurors debated the success of the added stair towers and felt the language as glass objects overpowered the composition of the facades. Might have been completely solid in concrete or metal-framed objects like the balconies. Nonetheless, a skillful conversion that hopefully will inspire the repurposing of other buildings from the city's industrial legacy.

Transformed into a collection of condos, century-old warehouse gets a new lease on life.

To the outside observer, downtown Des Moines's transformation as a vibrant collection of workspaces, shops, restaurants and residences may seem more planned than piecemeal. And they'd be right … sort of. Its revitalized character has been determined as much by a change in the American mindset—particularly when it comes to residential places—as it has by urban renewal efforts. Warehouse spaces, once the domain of manufacturing and dominated by bohemian artists, are now equally sought after by everyone from college grads to empty nesters.

It's a fortunate evolution for buildings such as the Whiteline Lofts. Once warehouse, office and storage space for Des Moines Tire, the nearly century-old concrete and brick building stood at what is loosely considered the southern edge of downtown. With the turn in central Des Moines' fortunes in the last decade of the twentieth century, it came to occupy a prime spot, accessible to plenty of downtown employers; a hop and a skip from the farmers market, restaurants, and coffee shops; and adjacent to sites such as the Science Center of Iowa.

INVISION began renovating the building for loft spaces in 2003, but it was not a project without difficulties.



TOM FELDMANN

For one, there were very few documents of the existing building, which meant the architects weren't sure if there was rebar holding up the exposed concrete frame.

"Any time you take an old existing building and try to remodel it into something different and new, it's always a challenge," says Matt Van Loon, project manager for the contractor Ryan Companies.

Selective demolition determined that the brick infilling the spaces between the concrete frame provided all the shear and lateral support the building had, which meant removing it for windows would necessitate transferring that load elsewhere. To accomplish that, INVISION cre-

Right: The concrete frame was salvaged; windows replaced the brick infill for a pattern that's reminiscent of the original structure.

Below: An enclosed stair tower does double duty, providing access for residents and structural support for the building. Every unit above ground level has a balcony; those on the first floor have walk-up access.

DALE PHOTOGRAPHICS

Project: Whiteline Lofts
Location: Des Moines, IA
Architect and Interior Design: INVISION planning | architecture | interiors
General Contractor: Ryan Companies
Electrical Contractor: Baker Electric
Mechanical Contractor: Wolin Mechanical Electrical Contractors
Structural Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering
Photographers: Dale Photographics; Tom Feldmann

KELLY ROBERSON

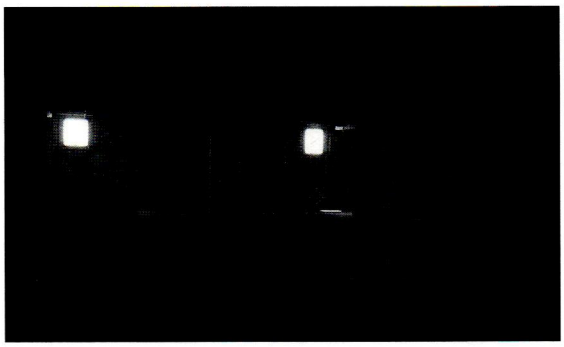
DALE PHOTOGRAPHICS

ated an external stair tower made up of a series of precast concrete panels; towering windows replaced the brick but replicated that rhythm. "We kept that line to be true to the original design," says Tom Feldmann, associate AIA and project manager at INVISION.

The rest of the project was more straightforward. The existing building was seven stories with a basement; INVISION added two more floors and created 58 units and some internal basement parking. "There weren't really any interior walls, which was kind of nice," says Feldmann. "We had a 70-by-133 floor plate with no redeeming qualities, so laying out the interior was really efficient.

The original intent was for most of the floors to mimic each other, but during design, a handful of custom unit clients stirred up the mix. Now, no two floors are the same and there are 26 different unit types. Ground-floor units—just 584 square feet—benefit from direct access to the outside and private walk-up. The rest of the building is a cornucopia of styles and sizes, all the way to penthouses on the top two floors.

Whatever unit a resident occupies, he or she has what few others in the city have: a 360-degree view of the skyline, a sweeping vista that includes the ball stadium, downtown and the river. It was part of the attraction for Joe Feldmann—Tom's nephew and intern architect—who was the very first person to purchase a loft in 2006. "It has great amenities—15-foot ceilings, radiant floors—and in the middle of summer we'll bring a projector up to the roof and watch movies," Joe says. "It has character and a history that drew me."



TOM FELDMANN

Above: Careful placement of HVAC, ductwork and electrical was important to maintain an uncluttered ceiling for the condo units. Each unit has stained or polished concrete floors with radiant heat.

Right: Fortunately for the architects, the interior of the building was mostly a shell that allowed them leeway in unit layout.

—Freelance writer and editor Kelly Roberson is sort of obsessed with selling her 1899 house for a downtown loft.

AWARD

AIA IOWA MERIT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Carefully Constructed Space

OPN ARCHITECTS MIX BOTH RESTRAINT AND DYNAMIC INTENTIONS IN THE DESIGN OF THEIR DES MOINES STUDIO

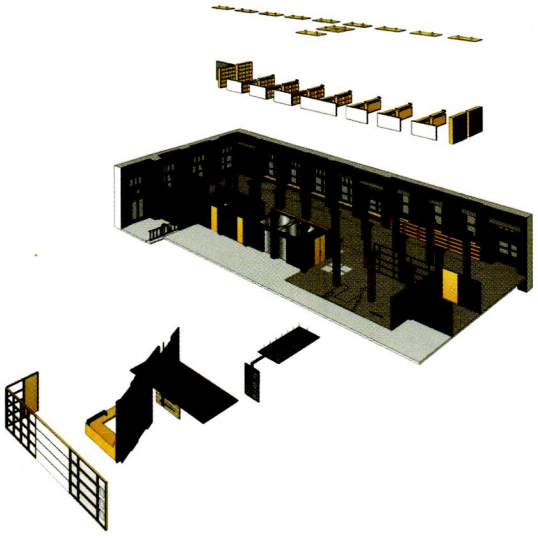
JURY COMMENTS: This architectural studio is rigorously and systematically conceived taking great advantage of the structural character of the existing mill building. The new construction is clearly distinguished from the old by its abstract, planer and linear composition while employing modern industrial materials of sheet steel and plywood—a beautiful dialogue results between old and new. Jurors felt the use of carpet as a flooring material was a compromise, and also commented that while mechanical systems were carefully organized, electrical conduit was haphazardly installed.

The Des Moines offices of OPN Architects show a careful sensitivity to the order of an existing warehouse space, while making it into something more. The design is curiously both serious and fun, a good representation of the firm's personality.

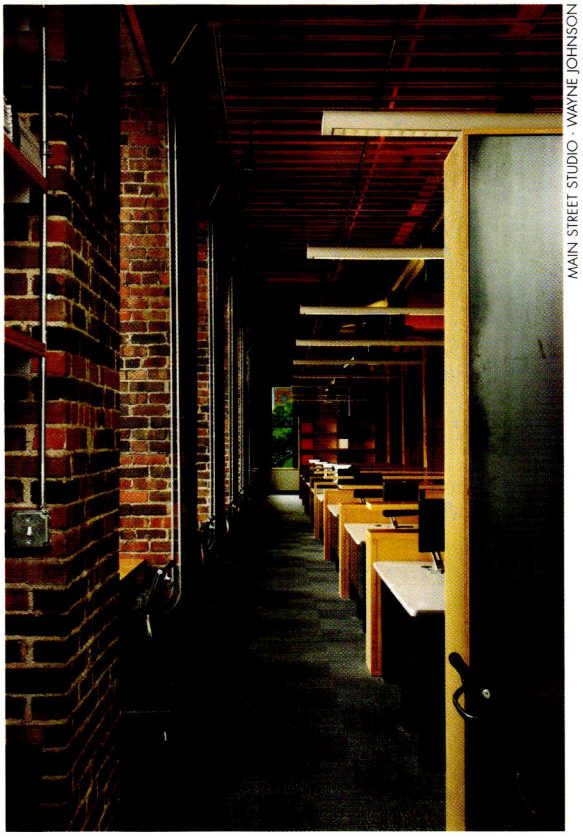
"People often say, 'a lot of work went into this,' when they sense the care and skill that its maker has lavished on a carefully constructed object. The notion that our work is an integral part of what we accomplish takes us to the very limits of our musings about the value of a work of art, a work of architecture." —Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*

Visiting the Des Moines offices of OPN Architects, you quickly understand it's a space for designers. The place is at once considered and yet not a showroom. This is common in architecture offices, but what makes this studio stand apart is the relative ease of moving between highly articulated and considered moments to much more straightforward and simple moves. It's easy to make the mistake of trying too hard in designing a space for yourself—and not striking a comfortable balance. The feel can be overly structured, with the ordering system casting a grid over everything. Or, it can look like the designer used every design gimmick they couldn't convince their clients to try. For better or worse, the personalities of the architects come out in the design of their own workplace, and OPN distinguished itself as smart and friendly.

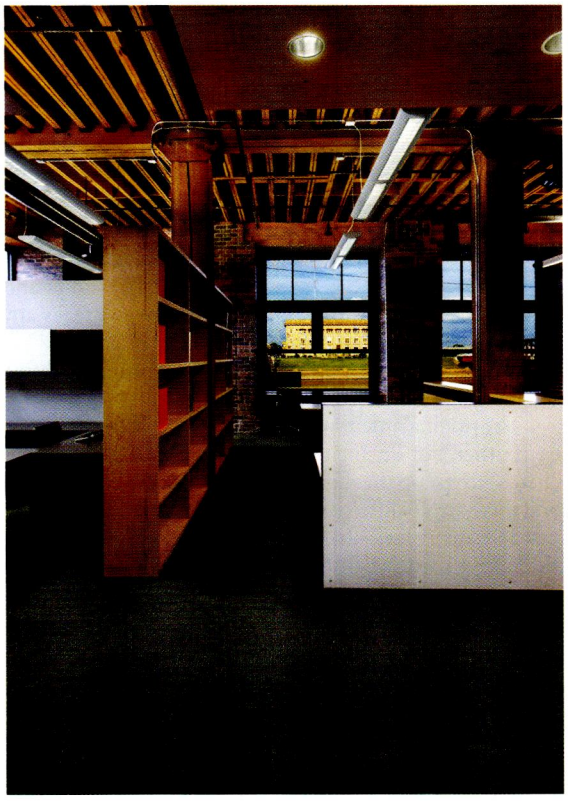
The office is on the first floor of a brick and wood warehouse building in downtown Des Moines. OPN project architect Brett Mendenhall wanted clarity between the old and new, but didn't follow a more predictable path of making the materials very different.



"The new wood and steel material palate went well with the old wood columns and steel in the space, creating a warm feel to the parts we added," he said. Keeping the materials simple has a calming effect: Rather than completely separating new and old, it unifies the feel of the



MAIN STREET STUDIO - WAYNE JOHNSON



MAIN STREET STUDIO - WAYNE JOHNSON

Above: The overall design is broken into two parts: a 10-bay grid of wooden columns housing the desks and service spaces, and an entry / conference area that projects onto the building's main lobby.

Left: A view down the brick shell of the office shows studio desks set into the column bays of the existing building.

Right: The overall design is broken into two parts: a 10-bay grid of wooden columns housing the desks and service spaces, and an entry/conference area that projects into the building's main lobby.

Project: Des Moines Office of OPN Architects
Location: Des Moines, IA
Architect: OPN Architects
General Contractor: Ryan Construction
Photographer: Main Street Studio - Wayne Johnson

JASON ALREAD

MAIN STREET STUDIO - WAYNE JOHNSON

Left: The entry to the conference room is a large Plyboo door with a custom fabricated set of steel hinges. This is set into an angled steel wall that guides visitors from the lobby into the studio space.

place. "We found salvaged hot-rolled steel to edge the low partitions, in keeping with the existing steel."

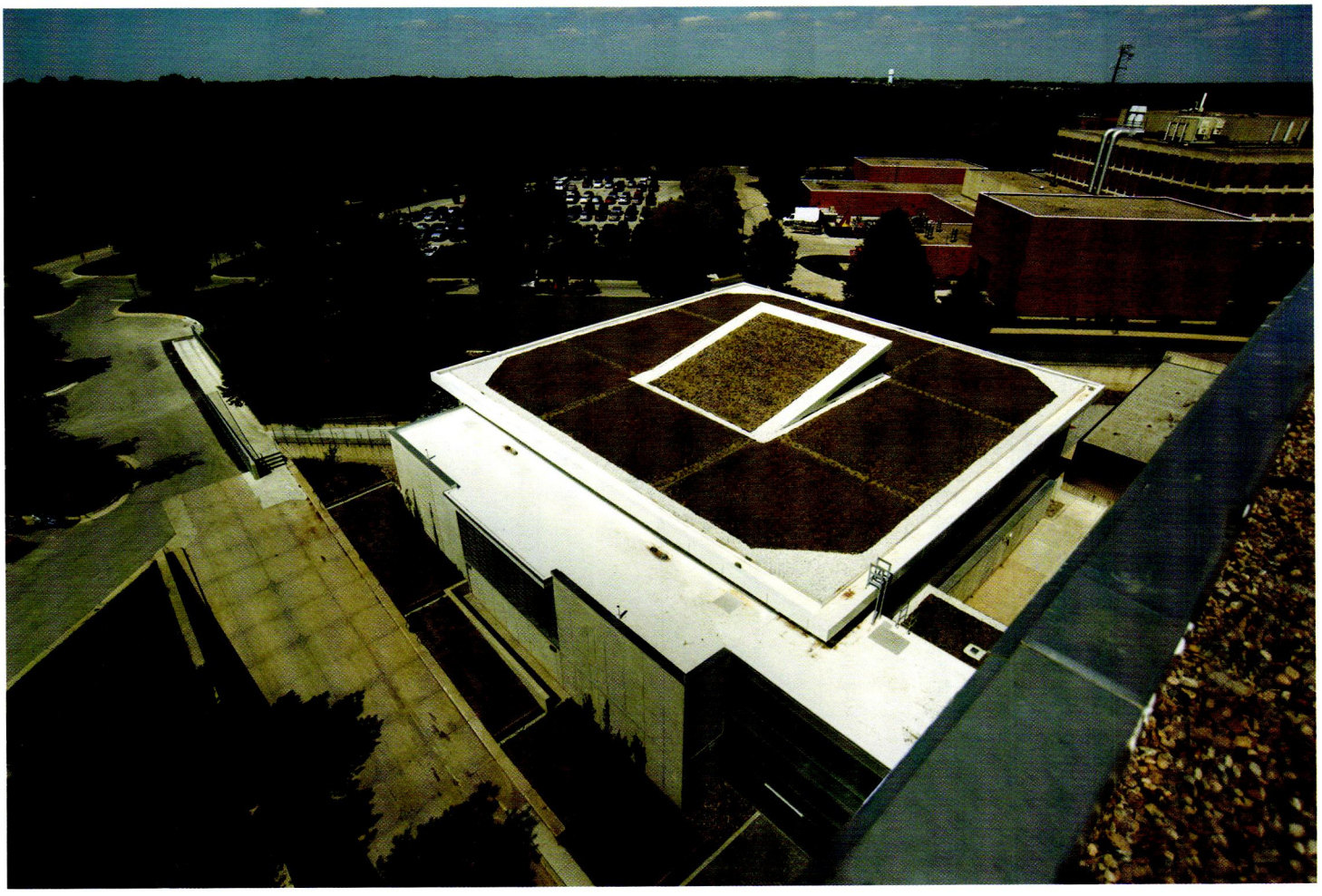
The overall design is broken into two parts: a 10-bay grid of wooden columns housing the desks and service spaces, and an entry/conference area that projects into the building's main lobby. All of it is tightly bound to the grid arrangement of the building, except the entry conference area. Emily Kistner oversaw much of the new work, having her desk directly next to the plastic partition that separated the construction from the working office.

"I worked through the process of construction for three months, right next to it," she said. Kistner noted that of the two main parts of the office, one was relatively easy, while the other was more difficult. "The studio desks fit pretty well into the existing column bays, but the lobby/conference area was tougher. We decided to make the oddity of that area more of a feature."

This works remarkably well, as you approach the simple reception desk and massive Plyboo and steel-hinged door immediately upon entry. The door is set into an angled steel wall and might be considered out of place if it wasn't so incredibly cool. The order of the building sets the overall order of the project, but in this one place the attention is drawn to the design and craft of this moment. It has a sense of humor, while showing a great deal of skill and care in assembly. It makes you think, "someone put a lot of work into this"—and that's the overall feel of the office. It inspires confidence in what the people who work here are capable of creating.

—Jason Alread, AIA, is an associate professor of architecture and the director of the graduate program at Iowa State University.

2010 EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AWARDS



HONOR AWARD: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AWARD

Iowa State University College of Design King Pavilion

RDG Planning & Design

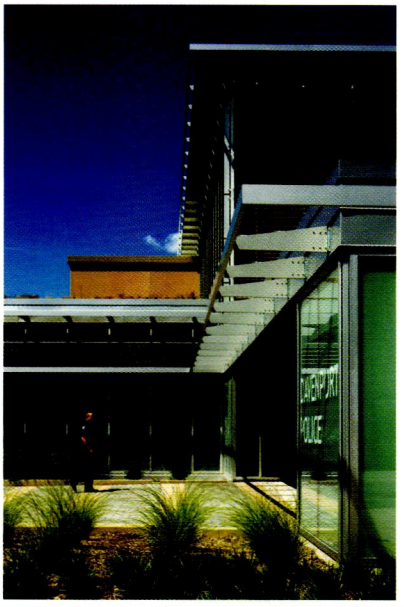
JURY COMMENTS: The gesture of the green roof plane folding open to provide daylight and the natural ventilation stack effect is a beautiful articulation of sustainable architecture. To be able to daylight 100 percent of the occupied spaces is exceptional. Nice integration of thermal mass and other passive systems. It appears the acoustics may present a challenge with the selected interior surfaces.

MERIT AWARD: VESSEL OF INNOVATION AWARD

University of Iowa Rowing Facility

Neumann Monson Architects

JURY COMMENTS: Very much liked the fact that space temperatures were allowed a wider range of comfort and that they engaged the occupant to accept less-perfect comfort conditions. This is the type of cultural shift in occupant engagement needed to make energy conservation more occupant driven. I love that the first floor of the building is allowed to flood. They have exceeded their own energy model so much so that I can't believe it, but, the great thing is that they are actually measuring and providing data. After the first year, the energy model doesn't matter.

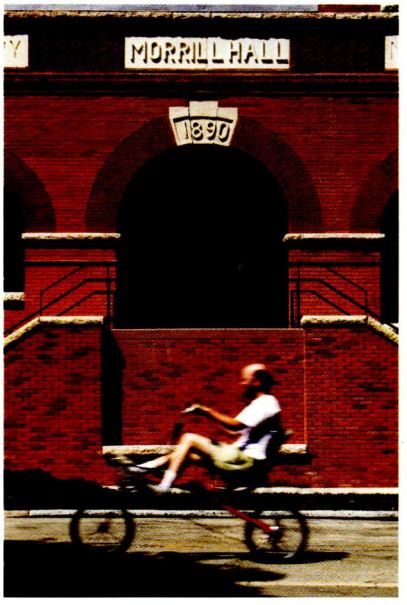


MERIT AWARD: PUBLIC LEADERSHIP AWARD

Iowa City Police Station

Neumann Monson Architects

JURY COMMENTS: Good job with building envelope and shading/daylighting and overall visible exterior microclimatic response. However, they did not apply it to the interior enough. High office partitions, and interior layout did not reflect the image of a sustainable space and could have addressed better vision of a sustainable work environment. They have addressed land use and site ecology quite well. The use of the emergency generator for load-shifting is a nice innovation.



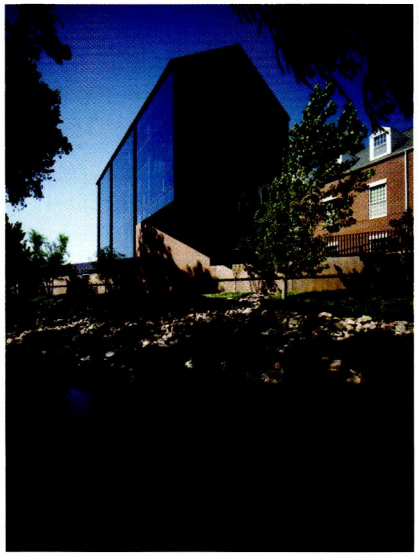
MERIT AWARD: CRADLE TO CRADLE AWARD

Iowa State University Morrill Hall

RDG Planning & Design

JURY COMMENTS: The longevity allowed for is amazing. They are expecting the 100-year-old building will have an equally long second life if maintained right. The interior detailing is beautiful. The mix of new functions with considerable flexibility and the integration of systems is impressive. The most sustainable thing to do is to reuse and restore instead of building new. However, with as many LEED points that favor a restoration project, there should have been a higher level of LEED certification pursued with more attention to energy and water efficiency, materials, renewable, etc.

2010 CENTRAL STATES DESIGN AWARDS



HEDRICH BLESSING PHOTOGRAPHERS

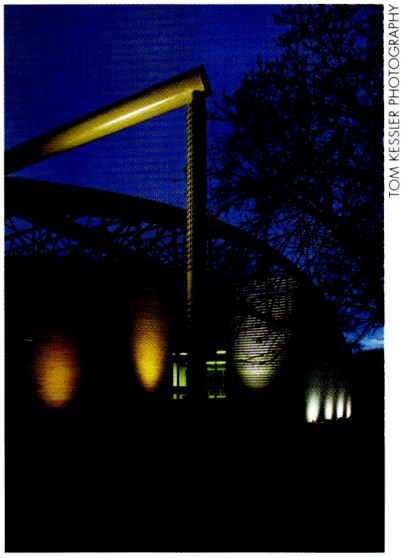
Chesapeake Fitness Center, East Addition

CITATION AWARD

Oklahoma City, OK

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Elliott + Associates Architects

JURY COMMENTS: This glass barn displays crisp, thoughtful and contextual volume, purposefully situated.



TOM KESSLER PHOTOGRAPHY

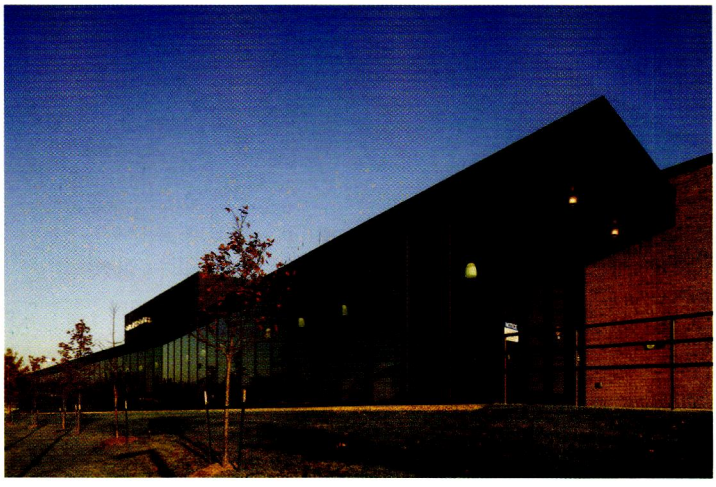
Sandhills Center at the Knight Museum

CITATION AWARD

Alliance, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: RDG Planning & Design

JURY COMMENTS: This is a great use of regional technologies in a creative way—raw materials in a resourceful way.



MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

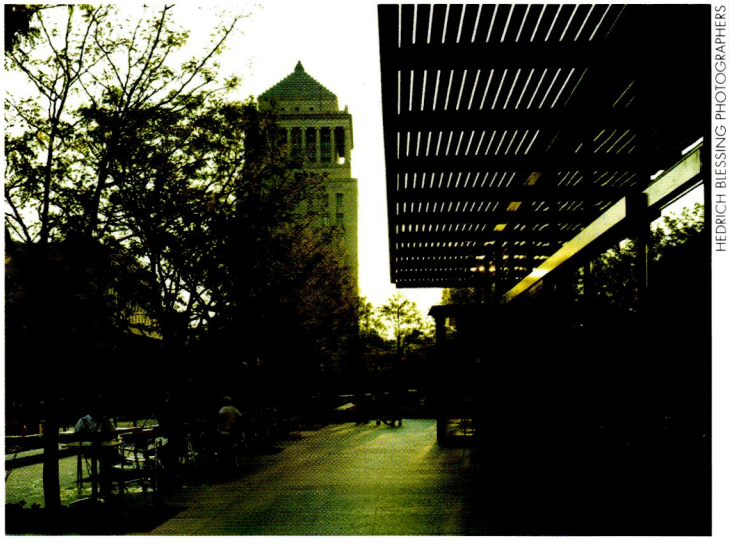
Metropolitan Community College Three Campuses, Three FEMA Shelters

MERIT AWARD

Kansas City, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Gould Evans

JURY COMMENTS: Conflation of landscape/architecture/campus urbanism makes the buildings achieve a local presence by acting as attractors to campus flows. This is a series of really well-integrated projects that contribute to the campus and the landscape.



HEDRICH BLESSING PHOTOGRAPHERS

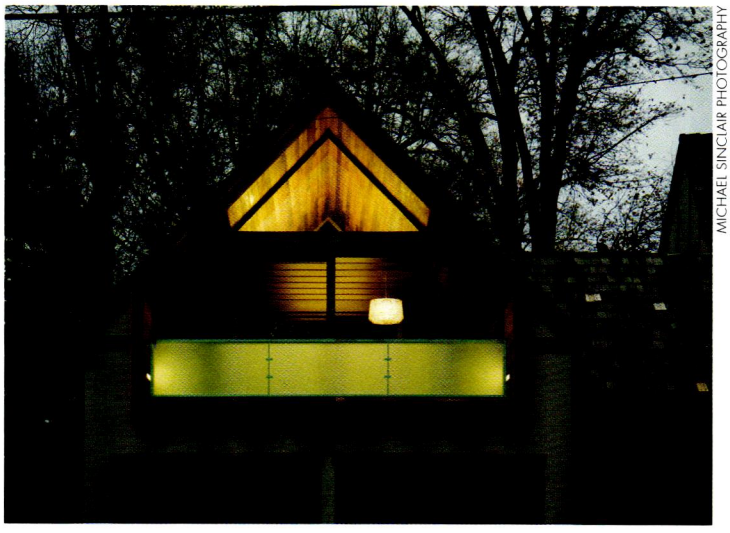
The Terrace View Café at the City Garden

MERIT AWARD

St. Louis, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: studioIdurham Architects

JURY COMMENTS: This project showed a disciplined simplicity and resourcefulness.



MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Tyler Residence

MERIT AWARD

Leawood, KS

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: el dorado inc

JURY COMMENTS: This is a smart and well-detailed insertion into prosaic suburban context of houses; a small well-executed project of insertion of a evocative domestic addition.

HDR ARCHITECTURE, INC.

Unit Load Redux

MERIT AWARD

Bellevue, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: HDR Architecture, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS: Extremely banal object accumulated to form a system that achieves spatial enclosure, transitory light and energy responses. The exhibition showed resourcefulness and great contrast in architectonics with a social and sustainable agenda.

MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Curved House

MERIT AWARD

Springfield, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Hufft Projects, LLC

JURY COMMENTS: Careful attention to material detail and logics. Systems of coding unify to create a coherent project. Eclectic but strong conceptual renovation set the tone for a unique and blurring outdoor landscape gathering area. The architect really worked to transform residence while maintaining the existing rooflines and mass.

MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Distribution Center For Cox Communications

HONOR AWARD

Topeka, KS

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: el dorado inc

JURY COMMENTS: Warehouse rises to the level of artful object with sensitive attention to light, time and surface that allows the project to unfold over the day and show hidden sides. This is amazingly sophisticated for such an industrial use. Great use of light, prefab and custom elements.

STUDIO 804, INC.

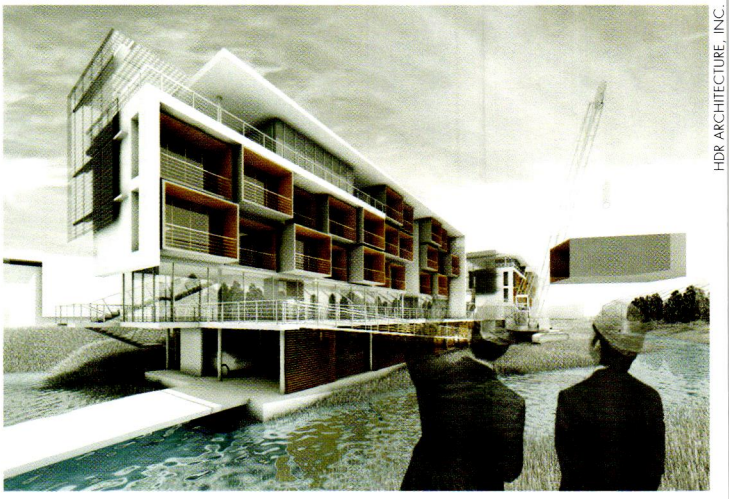
Prescott Passive House

HONOR AWARD

Kansas City, KS

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Studio 804, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS: Disciplined restraint within contemporary gable lineage. Clear idea between exterior response and interior volumes.



HDR ARCHITECTURE, INC.

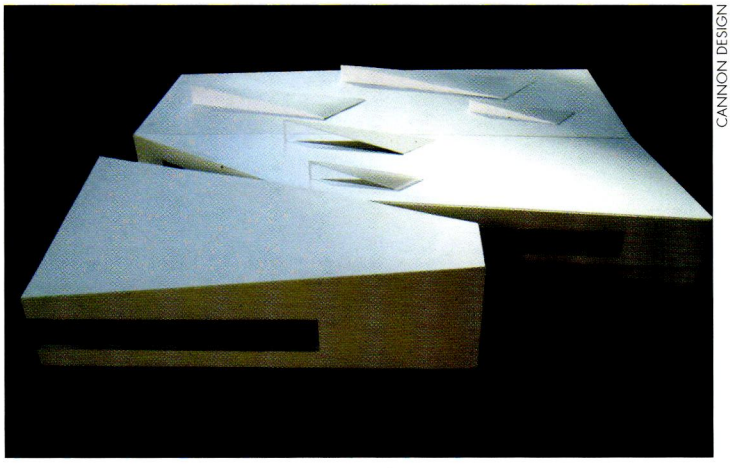
Iberian International Nanotechnology Braga Fellowship Residence

MERIT AWARD

Braga, Portugal

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: HDR Architecture, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS: The projectcintains a great series of landscape transitional edge spaces along a riverfront, well integrated and idea driven.



CANNON DESIGN

Missouri State University, New University Recreation Center

MERIT AWARD

Springfield, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Cannon Design

JURY COMMENTS: A controlled and disciplined series of cuts establish an urban link through the building. The project contains a great series of landscape transitional edge spaces along a riverfront, well-integrated and idea-driven.

MIN | DAY

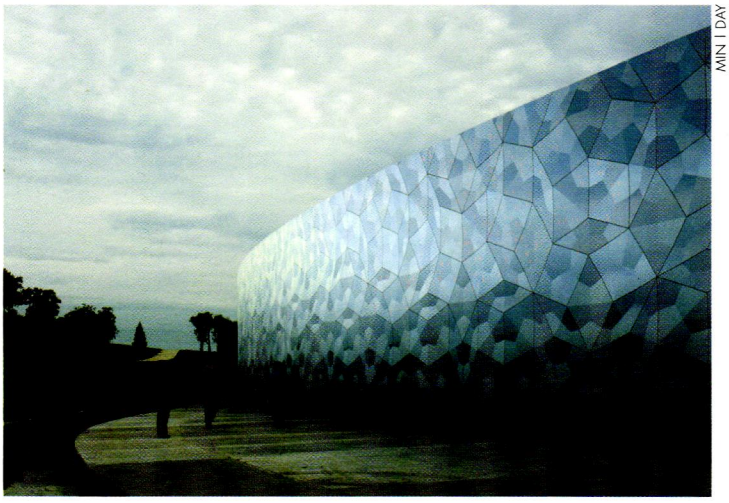
Urban Farm Project & Community Food Center

HONOR AWARD

Lincoln, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Min | Day

JURY COMMENTS: Using non-Euclidean logics that derive from leaf structure, a new organizational system is achieved that works its way systematically through the project from surface to geometry. The center is a sustainable idea, driven and creative in its social impact, and also its potential to develop new social ideas via architecture.



MIN | DAY

Antelope Valley Reflecting Wall

HONOR AWARD

Lincoln, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Min | Day

JURY COMMENTS: A periodic pattern animates the surface of what might normally be a banal retaining wall, turning it into a dynamic surface for light, reflection and pattern. The reflecting wall is a mesmerizing solution to an often overlooked opportunity; thoughtful use of materials, technology and reflectivity.

MIN | DAY

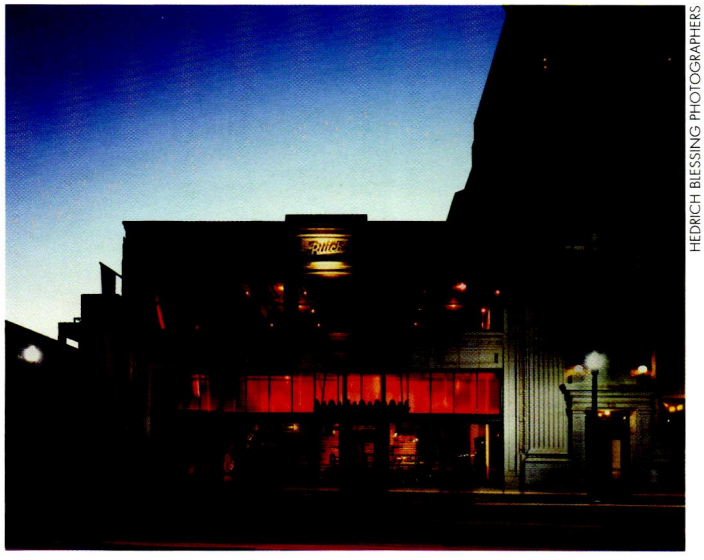
Art Farm | Campus

HONOR AWARD

Hamilton County, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Min | Day

JURY COMMENTS: Extremely sophisticated, non-fixed, evolving artist community extends principles out of "Art" logics, with non-deterministic planning strategies. Grounded in the fluctuating desires of the American farmer, this project provides a novel approach to conflating urban planning models with an open-ended art practice. This series of rigorous studies of domestic and agricultural structures is unified by a single purpose: innovative idea.



HEDRICH BLESSING PHOTOGRAPHERS

RED PrimeSteak

MERIT AWARD

Oklahoma City, OK

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Elliott + Associates Architects

JURY COMMENTS: The field of light defines central space for the restaurant, but also projects color into the adjacent spaces, forming a unified project. The red light bar is a very spatial installation of lights and conceptual ideas within a program that usually is driven by variation, not singular ideas.

FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS ©

Data

MERIT AWARD

Omaha, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Randy Brown Architects

JURY COMMENTS: Undulating color within a neutral white space. This project has well-integrated ideas, architecture and visual language in a well-executed interior and a limited budget.

MICHAEL SPILLERS, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS

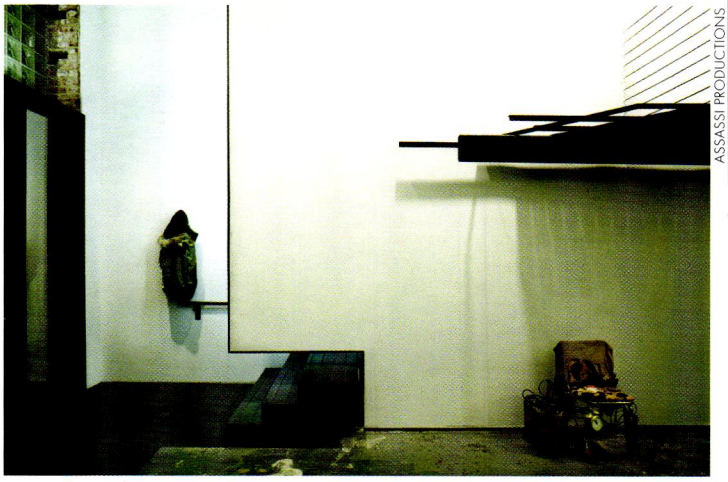
The Grand Ballroom, Kansas City Convention Center

MERIT AWARD

Kansas City, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: HNTB

JURY COMMENTS: Successful transitory space from day to night through the use of surface and light effects. There is a level of detail not often found in large-scaled projects. Great use of light and transitions of public space.



ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS

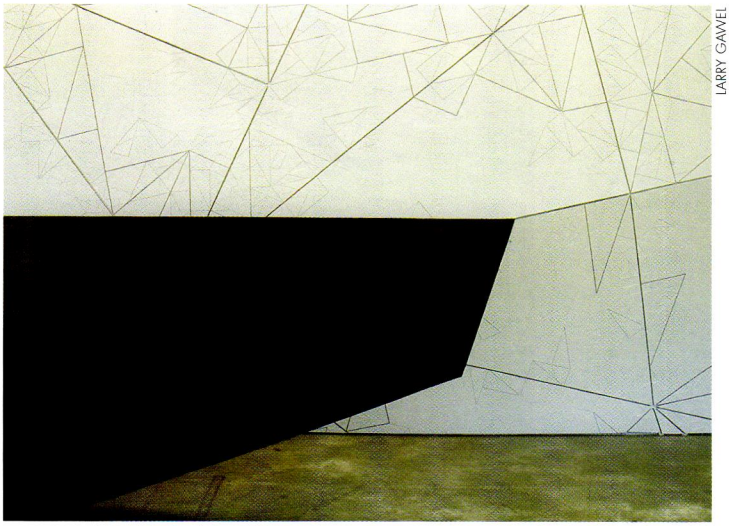
Kent Bellows Foundation

HONOR AWARD

Omaha, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Randy Brown Architects

JURY COMMENTS: A very specific set of local responses that transfer the original artist's inhabitation into new space through careful material choices and crafted detailing. There is a series of fabrications that tie together in incredibly resourceful and idea-driven constructions.



LARRY GAWEL

InfoShop

HONOR AWARD

Omaha, NE

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Min | Day

JURY COMMENTS: This project, with its controlled fractalizing system of geometry, makes subtle imprints into wall surfaces at reception while the rest of the gallery spaces remain disciplined and normative. The space is an amazingly well-conceived project of graphic, spatial and material sophistication; practical yet rigorous.

ARCHITECTURAL IMAGEWORKS LLC; MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Exeter Multipurpose Space

HONOR AWARD

Exeter, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Dake Weils Architecture

JURY COMMENTS: The acoustical negotiation between intimate arts use and gym results in a sophisticated response that integrates spatial effects, light, sound and material coding. The gym is a very strong project—a sculpted interior and great use of materials that is pragmatic yet innovative.

SASAKI ASSOCIATES, INC.

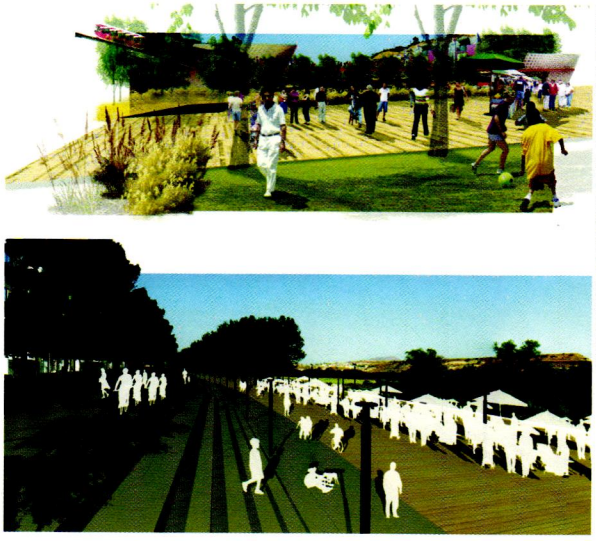
Council Bluffs Riverfront

MERIT AWARD

Council Bluffs, IA

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: Sasaki Associates, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS: Smart and sensitive conceptual zones established along a river's bend. We find great series of landscape transitional edge spaces along a riverfront, well-integrated and idea-driven.



WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS URBAN STUDIO

Form(ing) The Informal: A Sustainable Regional Watershed Development Stategy

MERIT AWARD

Tijuana, B.C., Mexico

DESIGNERS: Washington University in St. Louis Urban Studio

JURY COMMENTS: Smart planning concepts along a delicate and charged border. Water is thought about in a performative, multivalent way. This is a great community-minded master plan that is sustainably innovative and should set precedence in the future.

BNIM

Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Plan

HONOR AWARD

Greensburg, KS

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: BNIM

JURY COMMENTS: This is a totally ambitious "tabula rasa" reinvention of townscape through the conceptual lens of renewable energy and conservation ethos. This community's unique architectural vision is thoughtful in planning. This is an example of how to do it right if we do ever need to rebuild a community from the ground up. Grassroots at its best.

MICHAEL SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Troost Troost Troost

HONOR AWARD

Kansas City, MO

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM: el dorado inc

JURY COMMENTS: Sensitive and rich exploration of boulevard that uses a bottom-up approach to linear urban thinking. This contains strong idea-generated proposals that are empowering and practical and a great use of media.

AIA Iowa Excellence in Design Awards Jury

Alex Anmahian

Alex Anmahian is a principal and founding partner of Anmahian Winton Architects in Cambridge, Mass. Since its inception in 1992, their work has garnered international recognition for innovation in urban, institutional, commercial and residential projects that synthesize community, culture and context. AWA's current work includes the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World at Brown University, the critically acclaimed Harry Parker Boathouse for Community Rowing in Boston, the American Indian Learning Resource Center at the University of Minnesota and a new Technology Center in Ankara, Turkey.

Anmahian has been widely published in both American and European journals and has received numerous design awards from the American Institute of Architects, the Boston Society of Architects, the Business Week/Architectural Record Award, the Chicago Athenaeum, the AIA New York Housing Design Awards program and *Architect* magazine's Progressive Architecture Award.

Anmahian received a MArch from Harvard's Graduate School of Design and a BA in Architecture from the University of Florida, where he was the recipient of the 2008 Distinguished Alumni Award. He has lectured and served as visiting faculty member and design critic at Harvard University, MIT, RISD, Northeastern University, Roger Williams University, the American University of Beirut and the Boston Architectural College. Anmahian has also served on the board of the Boston Society of Architects, *Architecture Boston* magazine and the Boston Architectural College. He is a registered architect in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Minnesota.

Robert Miklos, FAIA

Robert Miklos, FAIA has been practicing architecture in Boston for 30 years with a focus on projects for arts, educational and cultural clients.

Through the planning and design process, he has helped his clients achieve their mission, enhance their identity and enrich the communities they serve. His work includes classroom buildings, libraries, and museums, as well as buildings for art education and the performing arts.

Miklos received his degree in architecture from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, where he also has taught. His teaching career also extends to the Rhode Island School of Design and Northeastern University.

In 2006, Miklos founded designLAB architects as a new practice model delivering high-quality projects through a more efficient delivery system. Prior to that, he served as a firm leader in several prominent Boston firms, including Machado & Silvetti, Schwartz/Silver Architects and Ann Beha Architects.

Miklos' work is widely published and has been recognized through local and regional chapter awards. His projects have received five AIA National Honor Awards and three Chicago Athenaeum Awards, as well as an AIA COTE Award in 2009. He has served on the board of the Boston Society of Architects as commissioner of design and was elected into the AIA College of Fellows in 2000.

His current work includes the expansion and repurposing of two libraries by mid-century Modernists: Marcel Breuer and Paul Rudolph.

James H. Collins, Jr., FAIA, LEED®

Jim Collins has served as president of Payette since 1998, after joining the firm in 1979. He is an energetic advocate for Payette's design focus and a vital link to clients. As a practicing architect, Collins designs research environments in campus settings. His design elevates the craft of building and is noted for its prototypical inventiveness.

Collins is a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he earned his BArch and MBA degrees with distinction. Collins was elevated to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in 2009. In 2003, he was awarded the Rensselaer Alumni Association Fellows Award, honoring an individual of exceptional achievement. Collins is an active lecturer and has served on numerous design juries, boards and advisory groups for architectural education.

Jane Weinzapfel, FAIA

Jane Weinzapfel, FAIA is principal of Leers Weinzapfel Associates, recipient of the 2007 AIA National Firm Award. She has directed the design of a number of award-winning projects, including the MBTA Operations Control Center in Boston, the MIT School of Architecture and Planning, and the University of Pennsylvania Gateway Complex. Her work has been published nationally and internationally and been honored with numerous design awards.

She received a BArch from the University of Arizona School of Architecture and has taught at MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, the University of Arizona School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome in 2002. Weinzapfel has been a juror and speaker at numerous universities and the AIA's international, national and regional design awards programs. She is an active member in many local and national organizations and served as the Boston Society of Architects' president in 2006.

AIA Iowa Excellence in Sustainable Design Awards Jury

Kent Duffy, FAIA

Kent Duffy is an award-winning design principal highly regarded for his innovations in sustainable design. With more than 35 years of experience, Duffy brings a passion for creating distinctive projects that educate by example and promote public awareness. In 2007, he was honored as a Fellow with the American Institute of Architects for his achievements with high-performance green buildings. His recent projects have garnered widespread recognition as prototypes for inventive daylighting, passive cooling and natural ventilation, and have been featured in numerous publications, including the *Wall Street Journal, New York Times, GreenSource, High Performing Buildings, Eco-Structure, Metropolis,* and *Solar Today.*

James Meyer AIA, NCARB, LEED® AP

James Meyer is a partner and co-founder of Opsis Architecture in Portland, Oregon, an award-winning firm rooted in the philosophy that design excellence is environmentally sustainable. In 2003, Meyer guided the firm's purchase and development of a 1910 historical structure in the Pearl District, transforming it into a LEED Gold Certified open studio the Opsis office. Meyer has more than 25 years of experience as an architect and is a frequent guest lecturer on the topic of sustainability at colleges and businesses around the Northwest. His sustainable design experience includes the Pringle Creek Development in Salem, Oregon, with the highest-rated LEED Platinum certified residence and the LEED Platinum certified Community Center; the LEED Gold certified Bend Parks and Recreation Administration Building; the LEED Platinum certified United Funds Advisor Headquarters; and the University of Oregon Alumni Center registered for LEED Gold certification.

Meyer is the recipient of the Fellow Institute of Green Professionals, has received numerous citations and design awards from the American Institute of Architects and was a co-founder of Portland AIA's Architecture Week. In 2007, he was awarded the National Green Building Land Development Project of the Year. Meyer has a degree in Architecture from the University of Oregon.

John Edward Breshears, PE, AIA LEED® AP

John Breshears has worked for more than 20 years in the design and engineering of buildings. Registered as both an architect and engineer, his primary endeavor has been the elegant and expressive combination of technology and form. He has pursued lines of research into non-traditional solutions to architectural problems, particularly aspects of biomimetic design.

Initially, this work focused on structural applications to bridge engineering. Breshears later developed and patented an energy-efficient enthalpy-recovery façade system based on principles of the human lung. This work was supported by grants from the Ove Arup Partnership and the Lindbergh Foundation for research that furthers the balance between the advance of technology and the preservation of the natural environment. Breshears' work on biomimetic research has been exhibited and published internationally.

Breshears is currently a principal with the ZGF Architects, LLP, where he is engaged in applications of research to a number of structural, architectural and urban design projects.

Omid Nabipoor, LEED® AP

Omid Nabipoor serves as president of Interface Engineering, a full-service, multi-disciplinary MEP engineering consulting firm. He provides leadership in the design and innovation of high-performance buildings, and is focused on the integrated design process, which leads to highest levels of energy and water efficiency in buildings. Nabipoor has been involved in the design of more than 100 LEED buildings, and has more than 20 years of experience in the design of heating, plumbing, ventilation and air conditioning systems in a variety of project types.

R. Peter Wilcox

R. Peter Wilcox is the senior manager for the commercial sector for the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA). Wilcox manages the Better Bricks program, which focuses on transforming markets to more energy-efficient practices in design and construction; building operations and maintenance; large offices; and municipal, university, school and hospital buildings. He has more than 30 years of experience in sustainable development, where he has designed, developed and/or managed a wide range of high-performance commercial, low income and market-rate multifamily and mixed used buildings.

Wilcox was the developer of the Mississippi Avenue Lofts in Portland, expected to be certified LEED Platinum, and he has also done pioneering work on Living Buildings. Earlier he taught solar and climate sensitive architecture at the universities of Kentucky, California at Berkeley, Oregon and the former Oregon School of Design.

A licensed architect, Wilcox has degrees in economics from Dartmouth College, in architecture from Cooper Union in New York City and in architectural history from the University of California at Berkeley, where he studied historical daylighting strategies. In his spare time, Wilcox builds and uses prototypical green boats of all sizes, plays music, serves on non-profit boards and enjoys spending time with his wife and two college-age children.

Dennis Wilde

Dennis Wilde's passion for sustainable urban development runs deep. From his graduate studies in architecture and urban planning to his current role at Gerding Edlen, environmental responsibility and smart design are central to his philosophy. Wilde first realized the possibilities of sustainability from a business perspective while attending a workshop on the Natural Step in 1997, the same year he joined Gerding Edlen. He was drawn to the company because of the ethical standards the firm articulated and employed in all of their dealings.

As Gerding Edlen's designated "green guy," Wilde has encouraged increased sustainability in development projects while building a strong business case for the economic and social benefits of environmental responsibility. Wilde's responsibilities include feasibility studies, management of the pre-construction process and overall project management, and he is also an active board member of the Oregon Natural Step Network.

Wilde is passionate about design as well, believing that it is an expression of man's highest aspirations. He has more than 20 years of experience in urban planning and design, and has been active in construction and real estate development since 1967. He earned a degree in architectural engineering from Washington State University, as well as master's degrees in architecture and urban planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

Clark Brockman, AIA, LEED® AP BD&C

Clark Brockman has more than 25 years of architectural experience that includes government projects with clients ranging from city and county to state and federal, complex renovations, affordable housing, higher education, aquatic centers and corporate campuses. Technically oriented and an excellent communicator, he particularly enjoys assisting in public and project dialogue regarding the pursuit of sustainability and green building. Brockman is involved with almost all of SERA's LEED projects and all of the firm's Living Building projects while also working within and outside of SERA to promote sustainability.

Brockman is a frequent lecturer and panel participant on green building process and policy, and the connections between buildings and climate change. He traveled to China in March 2008 to conduct multiple green building workshops on a United States Department of Energy grant. Brockman was a judge for the USGBC's first Living Building Challenge competition at Greenbuild 2007.

Brockman is past chair of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council board of directors, founding board member of the new International Living Building Institute and serves on the Oregon Natural Step's advisory board. In 2008, he served as the co-chair of the Governor of Oregon's Energy Efficiency Legislative Workgroup. Brockman also serves in a green building advisory capacity to the City of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Sustainable Development Commission, the Portland Development Commission, Multnomah and Clackamas Counties, the Oregon University System, Oregon's Office of the Governor and Federal Congressman David Wu's office.

Central States Region Excellence in Design Awards Jury

Jury Chair
Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA

Since 2001, Lawrence Scarpa's firm Brooks + Scarpa (formerly Pugh + Scarpa) has received more than 50 major design awards, including 16 National AIA Awards, 2005 Record Houses, 2003 Record Interiors, 2003 Rudy Bruner Prize, 2006 and 2003 AIA COTE "Top Ten Green Building" Awards and was a finalist for the World Habitat Award, one of 10 firms selected worldwide. In 2004, the Architectural League of New York selected him as an Emerging Voice in Architecture. His work was recently exhibited at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. In 2009, Scarpa received the *Interior Design* magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Scarpa has taught and lectured at the university level since 1987 at numerous schools, including UCLA, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Florida, Mississippi State University and SCI-arc. He was the 2010 Ivan Smith Eminent Visiting Professor at the University of Florida; the 2009 E. Fay Jones Distinguished Professor in Architecture at the University of Arkansas; the 2008 Ruth and Norman Moore Visiting Professor; the 2007 Eliel Saarinen Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan; 2005 Max Fisher Visiting Professor at Taubman College of Architecture at the University of Michigan; and the 2004 Friedman Fellow at the University of California at Berkeley.

David Montalba

As founder and principal of Montalba Architects, Inc., David Montalba is acting design principal on each project. Believing that architecture can improve quality of life, he is directed toward a humanistic approach, which often leads to solutions that are contextual, yet conceptual and visionary in their intent, affect and appeal. He has participated as a guest juror at the California College of the Arts, UCLA, University of Michigan and Cal Poly Pomona. Montalba is treasurer of the Los Angeles chapter of the American Institute of Architects, served as co-chair of the AIA's Academic Outreach Committee and 2x8 Exhibition Committee and has served as a board member of the Architecture and Design Museum in Los Angeles. Montalba was the recipient in 2008 of an AIA/Young Architects Award, AIA San Francisco Design Award, IDC and AIA San Francisco Design Award Karas Ghirardelli, and in 2007 received the AIA/LA Restaurant Design Award and AIA/LA People's Choice Award Finalist, Kara's Cupcakes.

Hadrian Predock

Hadrian Predock established Predock_Frane Architects in 2000 with John Frane as a collaborative research and development design studio. The work of their practice ranges from small-scale installations to large public venues. Seeking to open new territories for locality and specificity, they utilize a process of generative repetition—a methodology that focuses on mapping specific existing morphologies, actions, system, and material conditions, then generating and forecasting new architectural results based upon their findings.

Predock_Frane was named one of 10 emerging international architecture firms in 2002 by *Architectural Record*, and in 2005, as one of six emerging firms by the Architectural League in New York. They were selected to represent the United States in the U.S. Pavilion during the 2004 Venice Biennale, and were invited to participate in the 2006 Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial. Predock_Frane's work has won numerous awards, including a national AIA award for the Center of Gravity Foundation Hall. Their work has been published internationally, and they have both lectured widely. Predock has also been invited to teach at Tulane and Berkeley.

PORTFOLIO

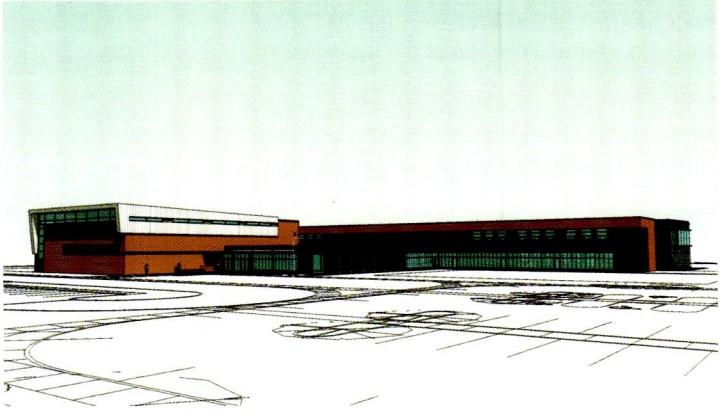
BY EVAN SHAW, AIA, LEED AP

Carroll Public Library
Carroll, Iowa
FEH Associates Inc.

FEH Associates Inc. of Sioux City and Des Moines was selected by the Carroll Public Library to design a new public library on a new site. FEH led the community through a site selection process and, after reviewing 20 sites, decided to use a sustainable approach by repurposing an old manufacturing facility on the south edge of downtown Carroll. Adjacent areas will also be redeveloped for green space, parking, and allow for future expansion and development. The building design was established through a community-wide design charrette, which helped develop the conceptual plans for the 32,000-square-foot facility.

Iowa City Community School District
New Elementary School
Iowa City, Iowa
OPN Architects

The two-story elementary will house preschool through sixth-grade students on a wooded site in a new development adjacent to Camp Cardinal Boulevard. The building features framed views of the surrounding landscape that encourage the blend of nature and the built environment in an educational setting. Construction begins in spring 2011 and is slated to conclude in summer 2012.



Private Residence
Dakota Dunes, South Dakota
HLKB Architecture

Set in an affluent development alongside the Missouri River, this private residence was designed to maximize views and daylight, yet still provide a sense of privacy. This is achieved through the use of sunscreen shading fins and a twisted roof plane that bathes the master suite in light in the morning, and illuminates the living room late in the day, following the natural day-to-day routine of the occupants. Living spaces are elevated one story above grade and supported from three cast-in-place concrete walls with a steel frame spanning between. This was done to help protect against structural damage when the river floods. It also serves a dual purpose of preserving views from the street to the river, something no other property in the development manages to do.

JOURNAL

BY DANIELLE HERMANN, AIA

Excerpts from John Ronan, AIA: A Keynote Address to the Iowa AIA Convention

New Realities

We live in conflicting times, for never has interest in architecture been so pronounced in the culture, yet the the role of the architect been so marginalized. A process once controlled by the architect has been slowly replaced by a model in which the architect is merely one service provider in a constellation of program managers, stakeholders and consultants who influence the process. In this new scenario, the architect is often relegated to the role of brand manager or empty generalist. We could once ignore this condition; now, the receding tide of the economy has laid it bare before our eyes.

There is an old joke that starts, "Architects know less and less about more and more until they know nothing about everything," and as with anything humorous, there is a kernel of truth to it—the Information Age we live in stretches the architect's knowledgebase ever thinner. But within these current trends there is opportunity for the architect. Building contractors who once came up through the trades, bringing with them specific and useful knowledge of building materials, now follow a career path that goes through a college classroom that often bypasses the construction site altogether, which has created a vacuum of knowledge within the project team that the properly trained architect can fill through a rigorous understanding of material properties, fabrication, assembly and its navigation through the building process. Architects will move back toward the center when their knowledgebase becomes the bridge between idea and reality.

New Tools

The last two decades have seen an explosion of tools that offer exciting new possibilities to the architect, from software programs that allow complex geometries to be more easily studied, analyzed and documented to software-driven fabrication tools that make their construction and assembly more easily realized. But with the advent of these new tools, there has also come an unsettling trend within academia, and certain parts of the profession, to "fetishize" the digital tools of design and fabrication, and to place value on an outcome by virtue of the means used to produce it.

These new tools have the appeal of speed and directness. Rapid prototyping reduces the feedback loop between designer and design, while digital fabrication tools plug the designer directly into the making of the object. But as these tools become commonplace within the industry, we have become silent witnesses to the disappearance of the craftsman from the professional landscape, as well as his knowledge about materials and their assembly. Architecture and making is no longer a dialogue in which information is shared, and knowledge passed down, but a one-way communication between designer and machine that gives primacy to authorship, too often resulting in a vacuous formalism.

The challenge for architects today is how to avail themselves of these new tools with the sensitivity and knowledge of the craftsman and employ them in a way that reconnects people to something that is culturally meaningful.

Technical Advancement

The history of modern architecture could be told through the development of modern technology. Since the advent of steel, architects have pushed the boundaries of what was possible, technologically, and the milestone developments in the profession often coincided with milestones in technical advancement. Technology became a touchstone, a standard by which the profession judged its own success and level of advancement.

But in the past 15 years we have seen a shattering of these boundaries thanks to advancements in technology, coupled with unlimited capital and ambition. With cost no longer an object, everything seemed possible, and was. Suddenly technical boundaries vanished and nothing seemed beyond the realm of the possible.

But when everything is possible, what do you do?

We are now seeing the effects of this lack of boundary—everything is possible but nothing is meaningful or relevant: architecture of the arbitrary. The challenge for architects today, now unconstrained by technology, is the definition of boundaries we impose on ourselves—the self-defined criteria that will preclude arbitrariness, and makes what we do culturally relevant.

The Age of Spectacle

If you lived on an island and the only information you received about the world outside was through design media, you might be fooled into thinking that all the buildings built in the past 15 years were art museums, performing arts centers and office towers, and only those by architects who had developed a signature style. The truth is that there have been a great number and variety of excellent projects, but the design press has largely been focused on spectacle.

This is something of a "chicken-or-the-egg" proposition. Did the media mistakenly conflate photogenic with important, or are they merely reporting objectively on a profession obsessed with formal innovation? No matter. The results are what they are, and the message is clear: What is valued is that which is unusual, sensational. The upshot of all this is now surrounds us: urban fabric rendered as independent formal objects, with each project competing for attention by attempting to be more formally outrageous than the previous one, like chattering pundits on a cable news shout-fest, straining louder and louder to be heard.

The profession embraced this new development with both arms, thinking it had never had it so good. Most of the results were empty branding exercises, attempting to create on the surface the illusion of difference that belies a boring sameness underneath—the same old soap in a new package. But now the party's over, and the profession is suffering a collective hangover. Perhaps it is time to reassess our priorities. Do we really want to become exterior decorators? Maybe the goal of architecture is not always to shock; perhaps some things need to be confirmed or validated. What do we leave society once the novelty of form has worn off? ●

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