

# Architecture

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Women *in*  
Architecture







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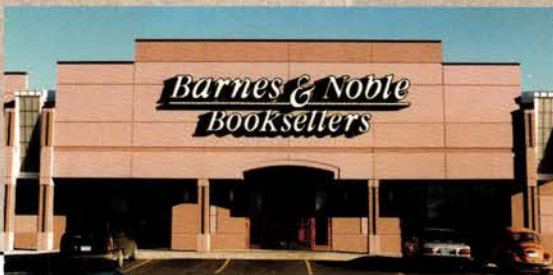
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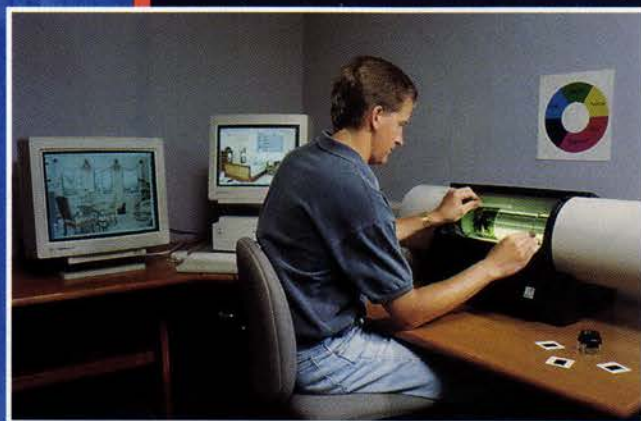
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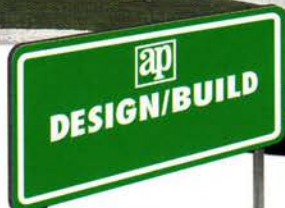
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Images of designs by women,  
illustrated by Rubin/Cordaro Design

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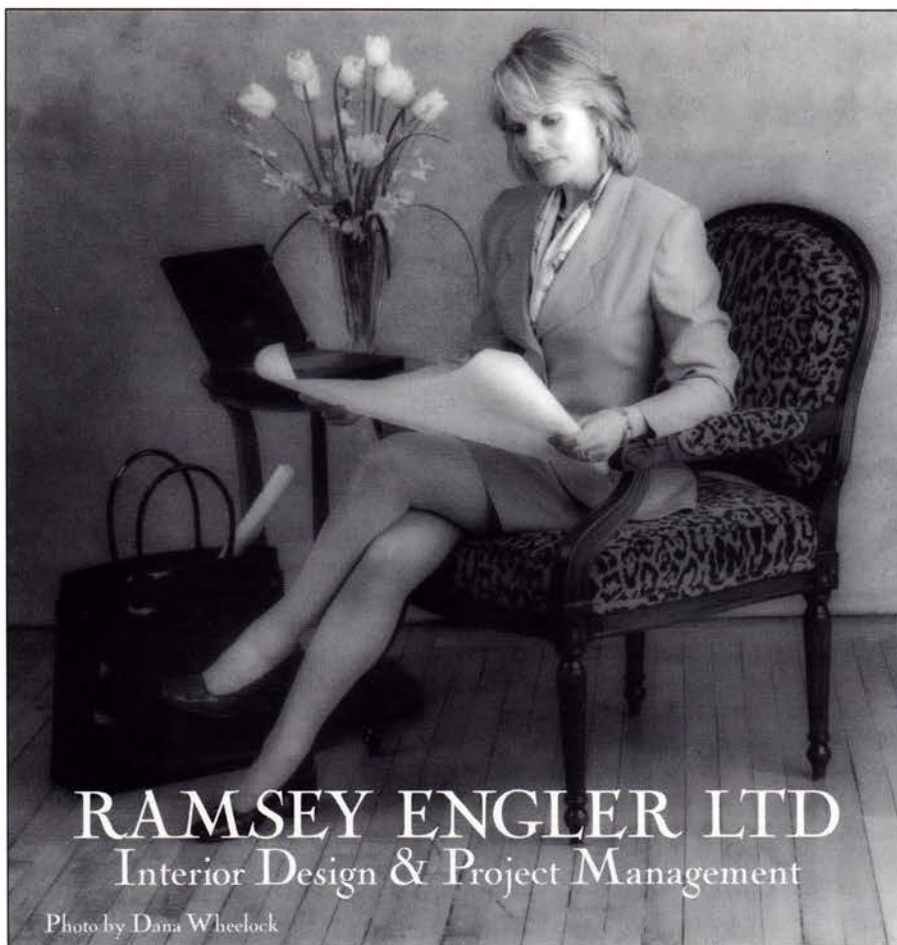


**Outstate quietude**  
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# Information, please

By Bill Beyer, AIA

Late one night in March, at a typically prolonged Minnesota legislative hearing, a senator snidely wondered how architecture could be considered more complex than brain surgery.

A good question.

Architects create information for others to transform into built reality, in much the same way that composers write music (design sounds) for orchestras to perform. Imagine experienced musicians assembled from 16 different orchestras to play a new score for the first and only time, in public, without a rehearsal. This is what we ask of the teams of contractors who translate our drawings and specifications into built reality.

Now, imagine surgeons writing and drawing instructions for brain surgery or a heart/lung transplant, to be performed by the lowest bidder. No time for change orders here. Expectations of perfection would tend to be low. Brain surgeons have the requisite skills and the luxury of doing the critical things directly. Architects must create information and communicate it to others who do the critical makings. A more complex informational transaction.

According to Jeremy Campbell in his book, *Grammatical Man*, "Information is a word which has never been easy to pin down....In medieval times it had various popular and literary uses. In addition to the ones we would recognize, the word was also used with a more active, constructive meaning, as something which gives certain form or character to matter, or to the mind; a force which shapes conduct, trains, instructs, inspires or guides."

*Designing and constructing a building involves the fine art of communication*

Information theory was crystallized in 1948 by Claude Shannon. Its common concerns were, "order and disorder; error and the control of error; possibilities and the actualizing of possibilities; uncertainty and the limits to un-

certainty." Shannon knew that error was endemic to any system, and his work led to more effective packaging and transmission of TV signals, and to a revolution in how scientists measure the world. Campbell reminds us that, "the whole purpose of communication is to send messages which are not fully predictable," and that, "A message conveys no information unless some prior uncertainty exists in the mind of the receiver about what the message will contain. And the greater the uncertainty, the larger the amount of information conveyed when the uncertainty is resolved."

Probability is at the core of information theory. When information is more probable, it can be encoded for communication in fewer informational units, or "bits." When improbable, uncertain and complex, more bits are required to effectively communicate.

In his musings on the evolution of probability, Campbell introduces us to Gerolamo Cardano, an Italian physician, mathematician and mystic who crystallized some of the laws of chance in a treatise titled *Liber De Ludo Aleae* (Handbook of Games of Chance) written about 1526. Cardano was also a wretchedly addicted gambler, who "despised himself for engaging in such a low activity, one that he classed with 'architecture, lawsuits and luxury' as a pursuit likely to bring a man to bankruptcy."

To communicate intent, architects draw and write one-of-a-kind software, leaving contractors to build. The difficulty of communicating information is at the core of architecture's complexity. The simplest messages can be misconstrued. This is easily demonstrated by the ubiquity of that common little retort, "What part of the word 'no' don't you understand?"

So here, in a nutshell, is the complexity of the design process. Architects create and communicate information that has never existed before in precisely this form, a process fraught with uncertainty. Think about how many messages we send. Design intent messages must be sent, received and understood. We intend to create a new place on a site that is unique in the cosmos. We define the rules of proposing and pricing, and of communicating with each other—the "general conditions" of agreeing to work together. We provide a written summary of the work to be done, along with useful information we've gathered about this particular building site. We make lots of drawings, diagrams and other abstract symbols illustrating what, where and how much to build, and specify standards of quality for each piece of the puzzle and relationships of each piece with all others. We set procedures for keeping, codifying and passing information. The probability of miscommunication, misunderstanding and error is high.

The inherent uncertainty of this process of communication could induce a kind of despair, but is ultimately balanced by the sheer joy of creation, the satisfaction of making lasting places for human habitation. Those involved in the complex and cooperative web of activity required to make places have the singular opportunity to fashion improbable beauty out of difficult circumstances.

Clearly, architecture informs our world.



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# Architectural

## HERITAGE

**T**he Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission lauded a wide array of historic buildings, places and people in its annual awards ceremony this May.

Topping the list of 12 winners was **Robert Roscoe**, who took the Steve Murray Award for his contribution to architectural preservation in Minnesota. "Enthusiastically playing a variety of roles—preservation architect, neighborhood activist, and long-standing member of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission—[Roscoe] has demonstrated his passion for and dedication to our city's heritage," the awards program noted.

Other winners included **Goodfellow's Restaurant**, designed by Shea Architects within the historic interior of the 1929 art-deco Forum Cafeteria in downtown Minneapolis. Across the Mississippi River from Goodfellow's is the **Marquette Block**, a group of five derelict, turn-of-the-century buildings brought back to life by Paul Madson + Associates. The jurors noted that "the block has been restored to a place of activity and urbanity, and has become a centerpiece of a revitalized Main Street neighborhood."

Several houses received awards, including **Owre House Kitchen**, for a new kitchen by MacDonald and Mack Architects to a Prairie-style house, originally designed by Purcell and Elmslie in 1912. The jurors noted that the kitchen, while having all the modern conveniences, "maintains an understanding and respect for the architecture of the building." Also on the awards roster were the **Healy Block Houses**, two 19th-century, Victorian houses by T.P. Healy in the Powderhorn neighborhood. Bob Roscoe worked with the owners and neighborhood groups in restoring the houses. The **Van Dusen Mansion**, restored by David Sabaka of Sabaka Design, was lauded for becoming a "cornerstone project for the rejuvenation of the Stevens Square/Ridgewood neighborhood."

For adaptive reuse, the **Foster House**, originally a hotel and carriage works in Minneapolis's warehouse district from the 1880s, was cited for its transformation into an emergency back-up plant providing cooling water for the new Federal Reserve Bank Building along the Mississippi River. Roger Johnson of Richard Smith Architects and Charlene Roise of Hesse

Roise worked with the Minneapolis Energy Center on the project. Another successful adaptive reuse is the **Tension Envelope Building**, in which the Arnold Development Company and Jack Bexell converted a 1916 manufacturing facility into a 39-unit apartment building in the warehouse district.

The **Central Neighborhood Improvement Association** was praised for being a "key player in the preservation of such important neighborhood resources as the Healy Block and the Hosmer Library." **The Victory Memorial Drive Re-Dedication Ceremony** in the Victory neighborhood was cited for restoring an important World War I memorial, in which 568 elm trees were planted along Victory Memorial Drive in June 1921 to commemorate fallen soldiers from Hennepin County. In August 1996 Victory Memorial Drive was rededicated with new landscaping and benches, and an adopt-a-marker program, which encourages residents to maintain markers beneath each tree.

Another community-wide effort is the **Longfellow Plan Book**, a primer that provides detailed instruction on remodeling and maintaining bungalows in the Longfellow neighborhood. The book is written by Robert Gerloff, a Minneapolis architect, and Kristi Johnson, of the Twin Cities Bungalow Club. Illustrations are by Peter Musty.

Finally, the jurors praised the **Marcy Holmes Historic Rehabilitation Program** for its two-year effort to restore and rehabilitate historic houses in the Marcy Holmes neighborhood.

Jurors included Jack Boarman, president of AIA Minneapolis; Robert Copeland, chair of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission; Sandy Gay, vice president of AIA Minneapolis; Tom Holman, of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission; Joe Metzler, of Mulfinger, Susanka, Mahady & Partners; and Lucy Thompson of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission.



*Restored Victorian houses grace the Healy Block (from top); redone storefronts enliven the Marquette Block; a ceremony marks the rededication of Victory Memorial Drive; and the rejuvenated Van Dusen Mansion shines again.*



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**Henry Moore  
Flanders Contemporary Art  
Minneapolis  
Through July 5**

This comprehensive exhibit of one of the century's most influential sculptors includes sculptures and models, as well as drawings and prints. In conjunction with the exhibit, the gallery is displaying a group of photographs by Moore's long-time friend, Gemma Levine.

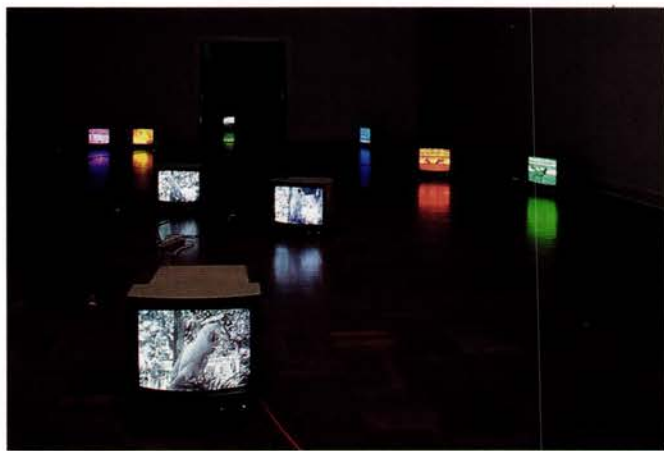
For more information, call (612) 344-1700.

**The Grand Tour: Travel Sketches from the  
Permanent Collection  
The Art Institute of Chicago  
Through July 6**

Almost 80 works representing 20 American architects from the museum's renowned architectural-drawings collection will be on display. Pieces date from the 1800s to the present, in mediums from quickie pencil sketches to refined pen-and-ink works.

For more information, call (312) 443-3600.

**Diana Thater: Orchids in the Land of Technology  
Walker Art Center  
Minneapolis  
July 13-Sept. 28**



Video installations

Diana Thater's light-filled environments feature color-saturated video images of the natural environment, ranging from flower gardens to panoramic vistas of iconic western landscapes. The exhibit will feature both single-channel video pieces as well as large-scale video projections tailored to the museum's architecture. Also on view will be a piece commissioned for the museum's permanent collection, which links the galleries and the sculpture garden.

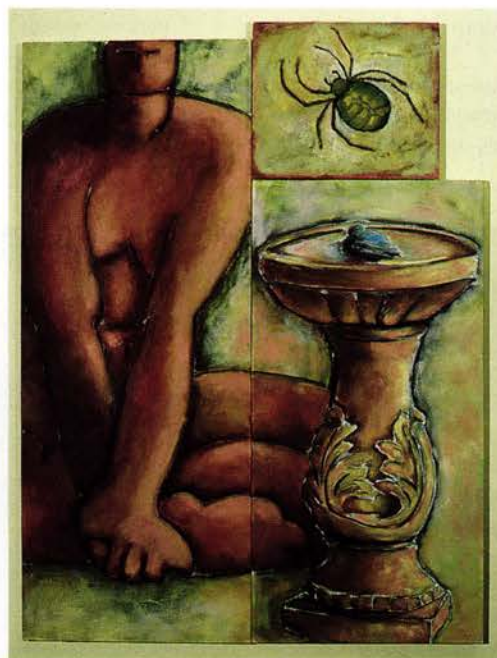
For more information, call (612) 375-7650.

**Minnesota Photographs  
Mike Melman  
Wanda Gag House  
226 N. Washington  
New Ulm, Minn.  
Through July 13**

On display are 25 photographs of architectural interiors and urban landscapes from around Minnesota by Minneapolis architect and photographer Mike Melman. A selection of Melman's photographs are featured in this issue of *Architecture Minnesota*, page 38.

For more information, call Melman at Cuningham Group (612) 379-3400.

**Lorie A. Schackmann  
Paintings  
Circa Gallery  
Minneapolis  
Through July 19**



Lauds, Lorie A. Schackmann, 1996.

Schackmann, an avid student of the human body for the past 15 years, is captivated by how the body's simple shapes and lines can be charged with meaning. Her current show presents eight paintings based in the traditional "Book of Houses," which serves as a guide for meditation. The artist chooses the female figure to represent the book's eight "offices" or periods of prayer.

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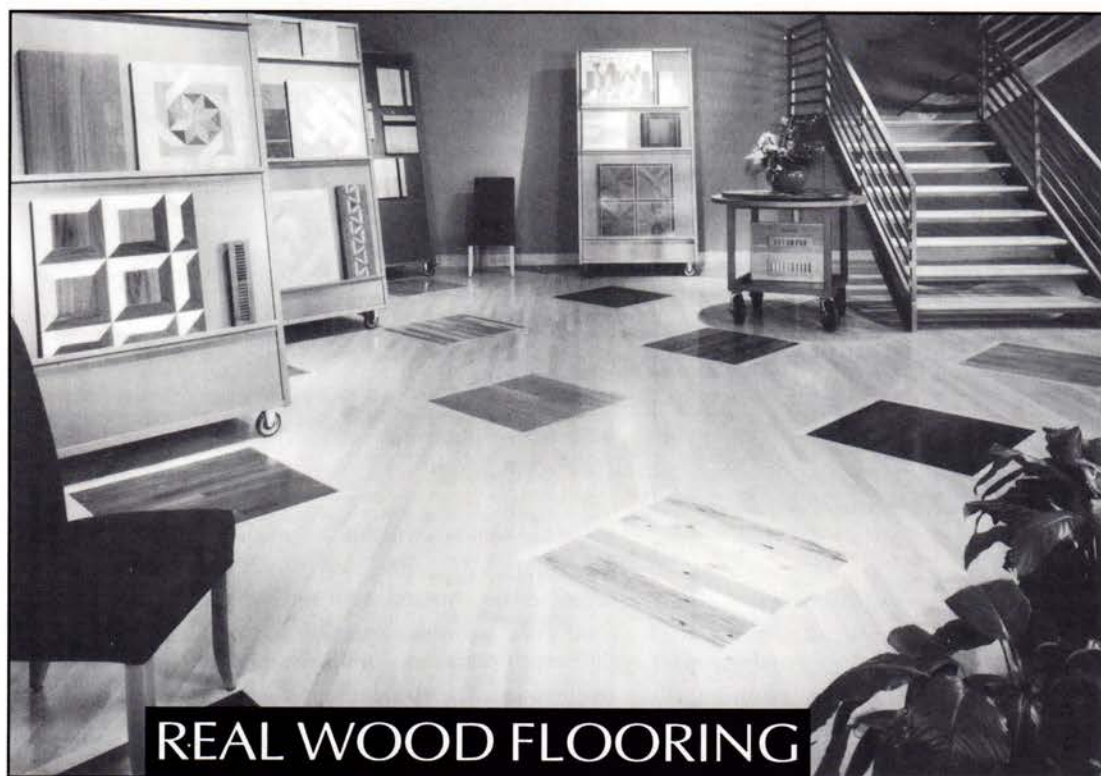
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Sixteen panels will be on view for five months before being replaced with 16 more panels in December. (Five months is the recommended maximum period for textiles to hang before being allowed to "rest.") All the featured quilts were made in America, but not necessarily Minnesota.

For more information, call (612) 870-3000.

**1997 Tweed Contemporary Artists Series  
Tweed Museum of Art  
Duluth  
Through July 31**

Now in its eighth year, this annual show features 22 regional artists. An illustrated catalog accompanies the show. Most works are for sale.

For more information, call (218) 726-8222.

**Marsden Hartley:  
American Modern  
Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis  
Through Aug. 2**

More than 50 works survey the career of this important American artist, who examined changing cultural and political realities.

For more information, call (612) 625-9494.

**Flesh!  
Thomas Barry Fine Arts  
Minneapolis  
Through Aug. 9**

Highlighted will be a group of artists who have used flesh as a dominant theme in their art. The common thread is the artists' recognition of flesh as visually and emotionally stimulating subject matter. One artist uses color photographs to depict up-close images of body parts. Another uses black-and-white photographs of chicken parts, arranged in such a way to suggest the human anatomy. Yet another artist uses large cibachrome prints of animal parts purchased at a Parisian meat market.

For more information, call (612) 338-3656.

**American Ruins  
Photographs by Jeff Krueger  
Dunn Brothers Coffee Gallery  
1506 W. Lake Street  
Minneapolis  
Through Aug. 11**

In large-scale black-and-white photographs, Minneapolis photographer Krueger depicts the urban landscape of the mid-20th century as if it were already in a state of ruin. By shooting structures and places without people or contemporary references, the photographer explores issues of loss, nostalgia and history.

For more information, call (612) 827-5094.



*New Seagull, Jeff Krueger.*

**The Grand Tour  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
Thursdays  
Through Aug. 21**



Ten of Europe's great cities are highlighted in this lecture series, which began June 5 with Seville. The series continues through July and most of August, with stops in Florence, July 10; London, July 17; Rome, July 31; Istanbul, Aug. 7; Berlin, Aug. 14; and Athens, Aug. 21.

For more information, call (612) 870-3000.



## 100 places *plus* 1

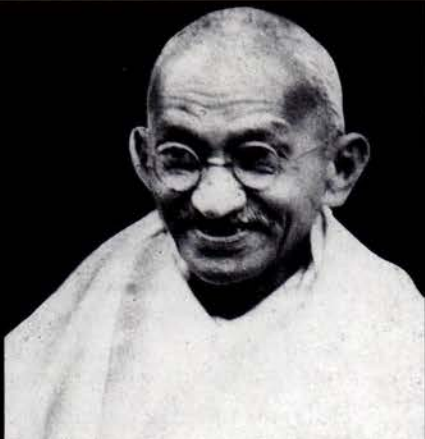
### *Funky, off-beat, traditional*

are words descriptive of this small book highlighting some of Minnesota's historical, cultural and architectural places - some known, others little-known.

In this collection of short essays with color photos, writers, architects and designers reflect on their favorite Minnesota places - all accessible to the public. They include art and architecture, bridges and buildings, streetscapes, parks, gardens and pavilions.

Published by AIA Minnesota, it's available in Twin Cities bookstores, or call 612-338-6763.

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## Julia Robinson

A professor at  
CALA, Robinson  
reflects on the  
expanding role  
of women in the  
architectural  
profession and  
the changing  
environment of  
architectural  
education

**W**hen Julia Robinson began attending architecture school at the University of Minnesota in 1966, she was one of three women in a class of 125 students. Robinson knew she was entering a profession dominated by male icons and modes of thought. Despite being introduced to the profession by her architect father, who had taken his daughter on site visits in Washington D.C., where the

family lived, she'd already felt the bewildering sting of bias. During her first year of study at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, she asked her instructor why her fellow student and boyfriend received an A, while she got a B on a project. The response: "We can't give you and your boyfriend the same grade."

While at the University of Minnesota, Robinson completed a thesis based on her research on the housing needs of residents of a racially and economically mixed neighborhood. After graduating, she worked for Dewey Thorbeck and John Cunningham in Minneapolis. She discovered voids and gaps in architectural research, and realized the need to develop research in such areas as energy and human use of buildings. Intrigued with the largely unexplored social-science aspects of architecture, she returned to the University for a graduate degree in anthropology. When Ralph Rapson, then head of the architecture school, asked her to help with advising, Robinson agreed. One thing led to another, and she was hired to teach first-year design

curriculum, becoming the first woman instructor in the architecture department.

Today, three other full-time and about 12 adjunct women faculty have joined Robinson, professor of architecture, in CALA. Robinson's classes focus on culture and architecture. And she has finished coediting a book with Andrzej Piotrowski, *The Discipline of Architecture*, an outgrowth of her postgraduate seminar on the topic. She talked with Architecture Minnesota about bias she's experienced, the demystification of the culture of architecture, changes in architectural education and the relevance of architecture to American society today.

**When you entered the architecture program at the University of Minnesota, how did it feel being one of three women in your class?**

In my family, I was the only daughter, with two brothers 10 years older than myself, so I was used to being in a male-oriented place and I wasn't at all intimidated by men. When I was an architecture student, a lot of the critics were the same age as my brothers, so I didn't take them too seriously and that was helpful.

Also, I had spent a year studying in Switzerland while I was in high school, so I had experienced cross-cultural living. As an architecture student, I soon realized architecture was like a foreign culture, as well. There was an attempt, on the part of the professors, to make you into a citizen of this culture. You were expected to abandon your own cultural ideas, give up any

notions of aesthetics you had acquired in the past and adopt a new set of architectural principles.

**In 1966, how open was this culture of architecture to women?**

It was not open to women. There were many instances where there was just open bias. Today, I can look back and understand the context in which things occurred and why people behaved the way they did. But at the time it was a mystery to me why my projects—especially if they were identical to someone else's—were not appreciated; why the men would get praise and I would get nothing.

**Did you struggle with wondering why you couldn't get better grades, not realizing such attitudes were simply the result of bias?**

There was a lot of that. But architectural education, at that time, was a mysterious process for everybody. Teachers would never say anything blatant like, "Don't make a flat roof, kiddo." They would just say they didn't like your design and you had to figure out why. Sometimes instructors didn't even know why they were objecting. At that time, there was just no need for people to explain their criticism.

**Where did that sort of attitude about teaching architecture come from?**

It had to do with the fact that architecture was originally an apprentice-based system. In the studio, you didn't learn explicit knowledge, you learned what is called tacit or implicit knowledge—you used the knowledge without

*Continued on page 40*



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## Rising ranks

*Once a rarity in a male-dominated profession, women architects have assumed leadership roles that transcend gender-specific constraints*

By Camille LeFevre

# They

are quick with the war stories and the laughs: Dressing in a business suit to enhance her professionalism, only to find herself on a job site climbing a ladder in a skirt—with six guys “holding” the ladder. Having clients assume she’s the interior designer on the team. Contractors that refuse to consult because she couldn’t possibly know anything about building construction. As a student in the 1950s, being instructed to wear a nice dress for a meeting with visiting critics because she’d be pouring coffee—but being envied by her male classmates as she took that opportunity to talk design one-on-one with those visitors.

Minnesota’s early women architects, like other women who forged careers in formerly male-dominated professions during the middle of this century, endured much and grabbed the opportunities they could while making inroads into largely closed territory. Creativity, hard work and a sense of humor also helped. Susan Blumentals, who laughingly describes herself as a “dinosaur” among Minnesota’s women architects, was among those trailblazers. She started practicing in the 1960s, joining her husband’s firm, Blumentals/Architecture, Inc., in 1976. Looking back over a career now spanning three decades,

she says she’s experienced “three phases of architecture.”

When she graduated from the University of Minnesota’s architecture school in the 1960s and started working, Blumentals says, “I was viewed as the little girl playing architecture with the big boys.” As more women began graduating from architecture school and entering the job market, she continues, “All of a sudden a group of skirts was moving in on what had been a male-dominated profession, and women were viewed as a threat. They weren’t little girls anymore but large numbers of women asking about equal pay for equal work and similar issues. And a lot of quiet hostility brewed among male architects about women coming into what had been for years a male-dominated profession.”

In the last ten years, Blumentals has seen the architectural profession enter a third phase in which the practitioners and the work are “gender neutral,” she says. “Architects are viewed as architects and gender is by far secondary to the work. Good design is being produced that one expects to see out of any good architect. I defy someone to take a piece of work and be able to say whether it was created by a man or a woman.”

Blumentals and others attribute the profession’s increasing neutralism to the

numbers of women becoming licensed and practicing. As of April 1997, out of the 54,755 members of national AIA, women architects numbered 5,969 (10.9 percent of the total) and 514 of those women are of color. In Minnesota, a similar percentage of AIA Minnesota members are women. While those numbers are well below even the 50-50 mark, they do represent significant change from a decade ago.

“More and more, it’s not so out of the ordinary to be a woman architect,” says Linda Ostberg, The Ostberg Architects, a firm she started in 1980 and which her husband joined two years ago.

“Within the industry, I don’t think people are surprised anymore when a woman is on site or in charge,” says Gail Andersen, The Andersen Group Architects, a commercial-architecture firm started by her husband and which she joined in 1987. “I’ve been practicing for almost 20 years. It takes a lot less effort for me to establish respect and rapport on site than it did 10 years ago. People aren’t going over my head anymore or saying, ‘Let me see what your husband thinks.’”

Women’s inroads into the architectural profession have not been one-way streets, however. As the profession

*Continued on page 44*



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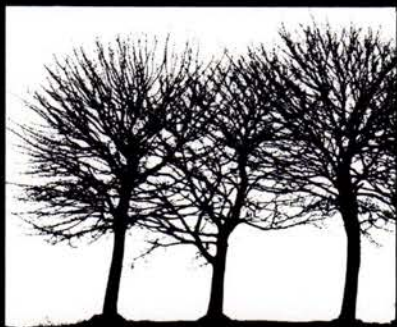
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– Loren Ahles, AIA, Project Designer

– Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc., Minneapolis

Photography: Tom Hlavaty



**Burnsville Marketplace – Burnsville, MN**

"Brick was chosen as the primary facing material...for all the long established, practical advantages; durability, low maintenance and cost effectiveness. Equally important...were the major aesthetic benefits...Brick was consistent with the surrounding context. The inherent design flexibility of unit masonry coupled with the available ranges of color and texture ensured us that Burnsville Marketplace would indeed age with interest."

– John Gould, AIA, Director of Design

– KKE Architects, Inc., Minneapolis

Photography: Lea Babcock



**Bailey Elementary School  
– South Washington  
County Schools, ISD 833,  
Dan Hoke, Superintendent**

"Brick brought the appropriate scale to this building for a sense of strength and warmth. Its color provides a pleasing contrast to the brightly colored steel elements, and its long-term durability adds value."

– James Rydeen, FAIA, President

– Armstrong, Torseth, Shold and

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Ralph Ellison gained visibility through *Invisible Man*. As the opening paragraphs tell us, he's not an invisible man like one of those spooks from a horror story. No, he's flesh and bones, living and breathing; yet because of the color of his skin, people refuse to see him for who he is. So often we have to shout just to be heard.

Why?

Because we live in a segregated, race-conscious, class-conscious, gender-conscious world. Wars are fought over race, religion, nationality and tribal ancestry. The recent bloodletting in Bosnia and Rwanda attests to the barbarism gnawing at society; Israel and Northern Ireland still seem as far from peace as ever.

## EQUAL BILLING

Battles broil for equality and justice on many levels—some more vociferous than others. American urban streets exploded in the '60s as African Americans marched for racial justice, while other groups hoisted their personal banners for equal rights as well. We're far from achieving equality in this country, but we have raised the level of awareness about the lack of equality. Thus we pay special attention to certain groups to stress the importance of diversity in a truly integrated society. If the world were perfect, we wouldn't need Black History month, gay-pride week or the women's movement, because people would understand the importance of social diversity and differences.

In this issue of *Architecture Minnesota*, we focus on women in architecture—not to highlight the differences between men and women architects—but to emphasize that creating good design is gender neutral. As Joan M. Soranno says, "We all bring our life perspective to a project." Gender is only one part of the perspective.

Yet historically gender has played a big part in women advancing—or not advancing—in architecture. Architecture long has been a male-dominated field. Established in 1857, the American Institute of Architects did not elect its first female member—Louise Blanchard Bethune of Buffalo, N.Y.—until 1888. Many women have moved to the architectural forefront since then, yet national female membership in AIA remains relatively low at 10 percent. Locally, AIA Minnesota female membership stands at approximately 12 percent. Men are still, for the most part, in power in Minnesota's architectural profession.

As with any professional arena, breaking down the barriers is tough. Susan Blumentals, who began practicing in the 1960s, says that in the early part of her career "a lot of quiet hostility brewed among male architects about women coming into what had been a male-dominated profession." Yet in the past decade, that attitude has improved. "Architects are viewed as architects and gender is by far secondary to the work," Blumentals says.

Similar prejudices confronted aspiring female architects several decades back in architecture schools, reports Julia Robinson of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota. Today, however, universities are more accepting as increasing numbers of women enroll in architecture programs and join such faculties as CALA, which has three full-time and 12 adjunct women faculty members.

Do women still have barriers to overcome? Sure. As with any group in the minority, victory often comes incrementally. After all, we still haven't had a female U.S. President. Yet architecture is becoming a much more encouraging field for women. "It takes a lot less effort for me to establish respect and rapport on the site than it did 10 years ago," says Gail Andersen, a principal with her husband David of The Andersen Group. "People aren't going over my head anymore or saying 'Let me see what your husband thinks.'"

The women featured in this issue are making a difference, because as architects they are good at what they do.

ERIC KUDALIS





## Joan M. Soranno

*Soranno is steering museum design past dusty classic building types toward a new aesthetic*

By Eric Kudalis

**J**oan M. Soranno of Hammel Green and Abrahamson is in a key position to reflect upon museum design.

"Museums traditionally have been perceived as somewhat imposing and elitist places," Soranno says. "But now they are trying to become more inclusive places, welcoming all members of a community. Museums are no longer just about hanging paintings on walls—they're about educating people and establishing a sense of community focus. Designing a museum today requires an understanding

of contemporary life and a sensitivity to what people need when they come to a museum."

Since graduating with a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Notre Dame in 1984, Soranno has become one of the Twin Cities's leading experts on museum design. Her career thus far has focused exclusively on museums; in fact, she has worked on the design teams of several notable museum additions to the Twin Cities, including the Minnesota History Center by HGA, the Minnesota Children's Museum by James/Snow Architects and Architectural Alliance, and the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum by Frank O. Gehry in association with Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle.

Working on the Weisman proved a particularly valuable learning experience. Although she had no design input on the building—a Frank Gehry building is designed by Frank Gehry and Frank Gehry only, mind you—she did gain an education in the construction process by working with Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle as architects of record.

"As a designer I go all the way through a project; I don't just stop at the schematic or design-development phases," Soranno says. "With the Weisman, I learned

how a building is put together through all phases of construction."

Until recently Soranno has been somewhat hidden from public attention, as her association with more established and experienced architects has overshadowed her own design role. But in her new position as a vice president and designer in HGA's Museum Group, Soranno has emerged from the sidelines as she takes on her own projects.



The original scheme of the Davenport Museum of Art (above) is now being redesigned by Soranno. Renderings show exterior and interior of Women of the West Museum (opposite), to be built in Boulder, Colo.

COURTESY HGA





Perhaps most prominent on her plate is the Women of the West Museum, a \$20 million, 100,000-square-foot education and research facility in Boulder, Colo. Groundbreaking still pending, the museum will focus on the multiethnic mix of women who helped shape western-American heritage. The museum will feature nine galleries, a 6,000-square-foot Education Center, a 300-seat auditorium and a 4,000-square-foot resource center.

A woman architect designing a museum about women might suggest a certain predilection toward a feminine aesthetic, but Soranno insists that gender doesn't enter the equation. "I don't think of myself as being a 'woman' designer, I think of myself simply as a 'designer,'" she says. "We all bring our life perspective to a project—whether it has to do specifically with male or female I don't know."

Certainly the design of the Women of the West Museum reflects Soranno's design aesthetic, as well as a feminine expression of the museum's subject matter.

"I'm interested in a contemporary expression because architecture must move forward," she says.

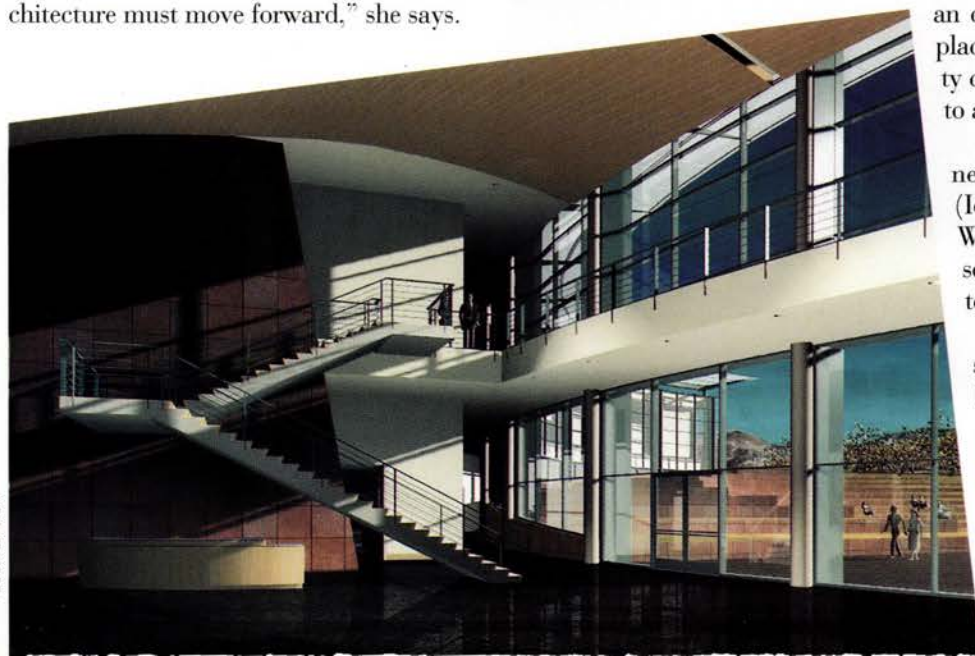
The 3-story, crescent-shaped building, featuring a curving wall of glass facing the Rocky Mountains, completes a circular sculpture garden surrounded by tiered landscaping forming an amphitheater. The building's crescent-moon shape is a female symbol for regeneration, Soranno says, as the building symbolically reaches out toward the landscape to complete the circle in nature.

It's not surprising that Soranno developed an interest in museum design. From an early age she was exposed to art and architecture. She was born in Boston but lived in Milan for seven years when her father accepted a business transfer when Soranno was in the fourth grade. In Europe—and in Milan in particular—she admired the importance of public spaces in daily life, as reflected in churches, museums and piazzas.

This appreciation of public spaces is evident in the Women of the West Museum. She considers the outdoor courtyard the museum's heart, where indigenous plants and art by western artists are sited alongside an outdoor dining area. This will be a place for casual gathering, a community created from the experience of going to a museum.

Next on Soranno's agenda is the new 65,000-square-foot Davenport (Iowa) Museum of Art. As with the Women of the West facility, the museum will be a contemporary architectural expression, she says.

"The client has asked for a strong vision," Soranno says. "The best architecture comes from a single, strong voice. It's nice to be in a position where you can develop that vision."







## Tammy Magney

*For 16 years, Magney has helped guide the evolution of academic architecture*

**F**or Tammy Magney, architecture mirrors our evolving society. One of four principals in the 130-person Minneapolis firm Armstrong, Torseth, Skold and Rydeen Inc., Magney often sees social change from the child or teenager's perspective.

"Designing for schools gives you a first-hand view of how culture is changing," says Magney, a partner in charge of marketing and educational planning. "The way we design schools reflects that changing culture. A lot has been learned about how people learn and how individual the learning process is. Schools today are designed to provide spaces for different

learning activities—from small group spaces for shared-learning experiences to break-out spaces for tutorials. And certainly schools are more high-tech today than they were 10 or 15 years ago; computer terminals and media equipment in the classroom are now commonplace."

While elementary- and secondary-school students are more techno savvy than their counterparts one generation back, they also are a more diverse group. And they are under greater pressure and more risk than they were during the mythically idyllic days of Beaver Cleaver. Drug use has surged in teen culture since the late '80s. In addition, many young people are dealing with the confusion of broken and extended families, while school violence has moved beyond the inner city to virtually any school.

While designing to enhance the learning environment, Magney also is designing to avoid problems. "You have to design for safety factors and make things visible, such as designing glass-enclosed stairwells to avoid creating hiding places," Magney says. Schools, too, are designed to withstand the usual wear-and-tear caused by a couple of thousand kids running through the corridors everyday.

"We think about designing to maintain the building for many years, and using such durable materials as concrete block or brick on the interior instead of Sheetrock™ whenever possible," Magney says. "We design buildings to withstand abuse."



Among Magney's projects is the Willmar High School (above), with interior commons area (right).



RALPH BERLOWITZ



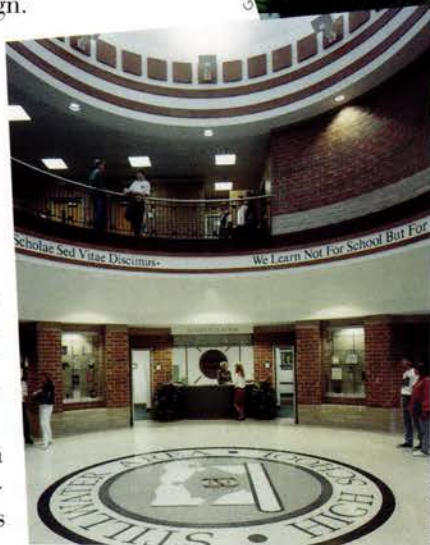
School design has been the focus of Magney's career from day one. She joined ATS&R after graduating from the architecture program at the University of Minnesota in 1981, rising from architectural intern to her present position. Nearly 98 percent of the firm's work concentrates on K-12 school design, although Magney hopes to start moving into some post-secondary school design.

Although school construction began to slow a bit in the late-'70s as the baby-boom flattened out, school construction is on the rise again because of renewed population growth. Most of the construction is not necessarily new buildings. ATS&R fairly evenly divides its school billing between new construction, and renovation and remodeling of existing buildings in the urban center or older suburbs.

Designing schools is often a community-wide effort for Magney. Schools frequently are used as community centers, especially in small towns, where parents, teachers, civic leaders and other residents will participate in the new-school planning process.

Community-wide effort is exactly what Magney seeks. "I like a building to settle into the site and the community," she says.

The recently completed Stillwater Area High School is a perfect example. The community wanted the school to have an immediate historic character and "look academic." The brick façade and traditional-appearing, double-hung win-



Magney designed the traditional brick-clad Stillwater Area High School (above), with its circular commons area under a rotunda (left), while taking a modern approach to Wayzata High School (below).

dows recall classic school design of a prewar era, while a historic bell perched atop the roof is taken from Stillwater's first K-12 school.

While many high schools often are large and unwieldy, Magney designs focal points throughout the buildings to help humanize the schools. "It's important to create special places in the lobbies and at entrances, and get as much natural light in as possible," Magney says.

Schools are civic landmarks that reflect a community's values. Knowledge of those values factors into Magney's design decisions.

"We're creating a building that will be a standard for other buildings," she says.

**E.K.**



COURTESY ATS&R





## Lynette Pollari

*Looking beyond  
singular buildings,  
Pollari puts  
architecture into its  
environmental context*

**L**ynette Pollari is not content to sit on past laurels accumulated over 16 years in the architectural field. Since joining Cuningham Group in Minneapolis in 1989, she has distinguished herself for her educational-design work, as well as teaching at the University of Minnesota. Yet in 1993 she took a sabbatical from Cuningham Group and headed for the master's program at the University of California at Berkeley to take on a whole new field of study—urban and landscape design and sustainable issues.

"I wanted more context for my work," she says. "I wanted to pull multiple issues into the design process and become a more holistic designer by studying fields of which I had little or no experience. We need to be honest about what it takes to do better work."

Part of what it takes to do better work, according to Pollari, is to constantly ask questions by combining research with practice. Her intent was

not to leave Cuningham Group, but to "go back into the firm as a different person" with a redirected focus. Berkeley helped redefine that focus.

For a studio project at Berkeley, she worked with a team of students and designers to develop a set of "sustainable" design guidelines for the Circle T Ranch for the Alliance Development Company in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The studio project presented a unique marriage between the academic world and private sector, in which the client was committed to sustainable design, sound planning and placemaking.

Pollari's primary focus was her master's thesis—"Re-Imagining the Strip"—in which she developed design guidelines for San Pablo Avenue, the longest commercial strip in the San Francisco Bay area. In the thesis, she considered such urban-design concepts as the strip as home-turf for neighborhood; the strip as



CHRISTIAN KORAS





a connecting device for multiple communities; the strip as placemaking; and the strip as a sustainable resource.

All that may sound like a lot of academic jargon, but that's the point with Pollari. Research and ideas can be converted into lasting and important architecture. When she completed her master's degree in 1994, she had an opportunity to apply academic theorizing to practice. John Cunningham and she began discussing sustainable design—the architectural catch phrase of the '90s. But the two wanted this to be more than just talk. Cunningham believed that it was important for the firm to embrace sustainable- and environmental-design issues.

With Cunningham's commitment, Pollari launched the firm's in-house Environmental Resource Department in September 1994. This think tank, combining Pollari's love for research and practice, functions as an environmental nerve center in which the departmental staff, serving as consultants, research and implement ecological-design strategies for office projects, and identify client needs. The department's emphasis is on daylighting, indoor-air quality and resource-efficient design. Pollari says the Environmental Resource Department often pulls experts from other fields—engineers, lighting consultants, sustainable-material experts—“who come into the firm and help us accomplish our mission of designing environmentally sound buildings.”

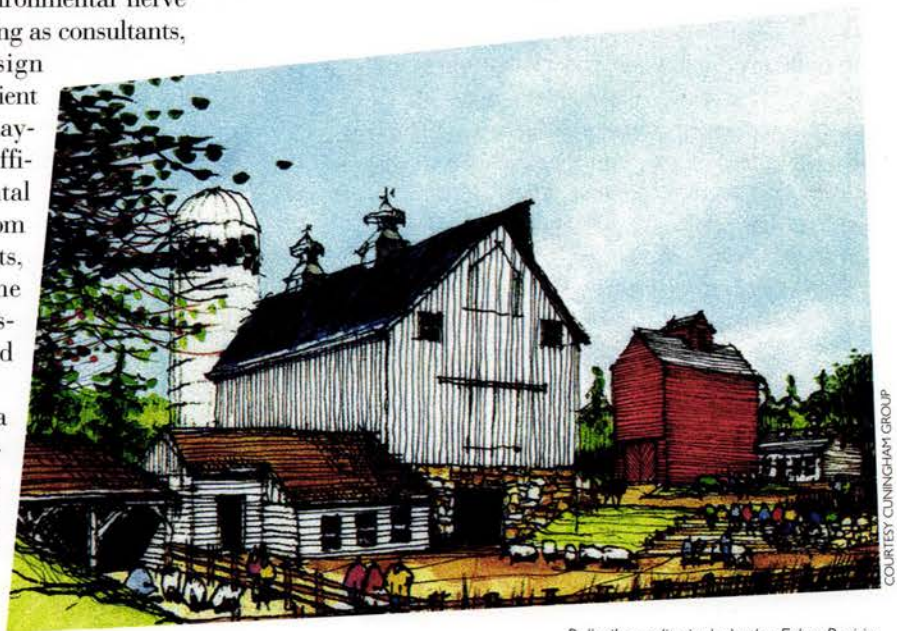
One of the firm's most visible projects is a K-12 magnet school along Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis for the West Metro Education Program. This “living” school, which focuses on science, art and technology, will be akin to a hands-on science museum when completed in early fall of 1998. A central kiosk will alert students to various learning sites. “We are defining areas throughout the building that can become clear, experiential learning sites,” Pollari says. Portions of the structure will be exposed, for instance, to explain the construction process. Nature partially will be explained through a roof-top garden; the climate-control system will become an exhibit examining energy

use; and operable windows will illustrate ventilation and natural cooling systems.

Since developing the Environmental Resource Department, Pollari has tackled a new challenge by heading to the firm's Phoenix office under a five-year plan, where she is working on educational studio marketing and projects, some with Navajo Nation, whose cultural values embrace energy and resource efficiency. Yet she remains involved in Minneapolis—not only in the downtown-school project, but in several other environmentally focused projects.

She believes that within five years Cunningham Group will be nationally recognized for its environmental research and implementation.

“At Cunningham Group, the paradigm already has shifted to advance environmental concerns,” she says. **E.K.**



Pollari's credits include the Eden Prairie High School (opposite); the proposed K-12 magnet school (top) in downtown Minneapolis; and the Farmyard (above), part of the Minnesota Zoo Farm exhibit.





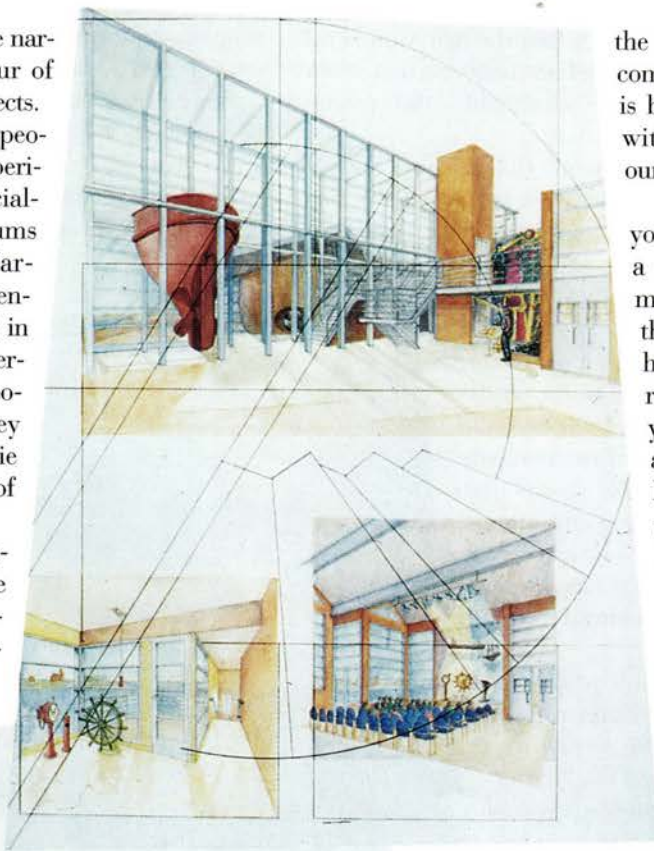
## Janis LaDouceur

*For LaDouceur, who specializes in interpretive museums, architecture is a collage of human experiences*

**A**rchitecture is an expressive narrative for Janis LaDouceur of Barbour/LaDouceur Architects.

"Architecture is a vehicle to tell people's stories and interpret their experiences," says LaDouceur, who specializes in historic interpretive museums with her business partner, John Barbour. "A building or interpretive center gains meaning when you view it in terms of your own experiences. Interpretive centers are museums for people; they are about people and they glorify the average person. They tie the average person to the actions of our society and forbearers."

In designing an interpretive center, LaDouceur is inspired by the different levels of human experiences that such a place integrates—



the historic subject matter, the community in which the center is built, the visitors who leave with a new understanding of our culture.

"At an interpretive center, you may see an exhibit about a common person—a coal miner, for instance—and through my telling you about him shoveling coal, I'm glorifying his life and telling you something about him and yourself, because our lives gain meaning through understanding others," LaDouceur explains.

Architecture is a community effort for LaDouceur and Barbour, who work collaboratively on designing all projects that come through the office. They meet with townspeople to learn about their lives and a community's history.

"We ask them what their museum should be about," LaDouceur says. "We ask them to dream."

Prominent on the firm's design boards are the Richard I. Bong Heritage Center in Poplar, Wis., and the Edna G. Tugboat Museum in Two Harbors, Minn. The tugboat museum tells the history of the ore-shipping industry in the North Shore community, and of the 1896 tugboat that pulled the massive 800-foot-long ore boats into the



COURTESY BARBOUR/LADOUCEUR



docks for loading. The Bong Heritage Museum narrates the saga of Poplar's native son, Second World War fighter pilot Richard Bong, who was killed during a test flight at age 24. Looking beyond just Bong, the museum is dedicated to his memory and others who served in the war.

The design of the tugboat museum takes its cues from the ore docks and the surrounding community, built in the 1890s by the DM&IR Railroad as a shipping port for lumber, coal and iron ore. The brightly colored and refurbished Edna G., of course, will be the museum's focus, while the adjacent interpretive building will include a composite of visual elements, including such features on the north façade as steel trusses that recall the rusted-metal ore docks, and on the south façade several small, gable-roof structures that recall fishing shacks from the region. The lake-facing side will be the most festive, visually ignited with glass and the colorful tugboat resting between the docks and the museum. The main interior corridor will resemble the steel structure and rhythm of the ore docks.

The Bong Heritage Museum, likewise, will employ a visual collage of forms and materials. The most salient—especially on highway approach—is the brushed-aluminum hangar housing a P-38 fighter plane. The canopy-style roof with tie-down bolts recalls 1940s-era Quonset huts. A stylized air-traffic control tower capped with an American flag will advertise the museum to passersby.

Interpretive-museum design is a natural for LaDouceur and Barbour. They struck up a professional relationship in 1993 while working on The Northwest Company Fur Post Interpretive Center in Pine City, Minn., for Winsor/Faricy Architects in St. Paul. They established their own firm soon afterward. While they take on a variety of projects, historical-interpretive museums are their passion.

The Bong and tugboat museums reflect their eclectic design aesthetic.

"I like buildings that are composed of many pieces artfully put together," LaDouceur says. "Our buildings visually represent many elements and themes frozen in a kind of dance. John and I tell stories about individuals, eras, lives, history and people. Architecture is never about one thing." **E.K.**



LaDouceur's eclectic style is seen in these composite images of the proposed Edna G. Tugboat Museum (opposite) in Two Harbors, Minn., and the Richard I. Bong Heritage Center (above) in Poplar, Wis.

COURTESY BARBOURLADOUCEUR





## Julie Snow

*In two new projects, Snow continues to show that the soul of modernism is awash with light*

**J**ulie Snow points to a group of framed architectural-award certificates on the wall of her downtown-Minneapolis office and chuckles that they are beginning to fade in the sun. "We're going to need to win another award soon before they fade away," she says.

Winning awards is no problem for Snow; she has quite a collection—and for good reasons. She's completed some stellar work of late, including three manufacturing facilities since 1990 that each won AIA Minnesota Honor Awards. Phillips Plastics Corporation Short Run Division in New Richmond, Wis., Origen Center in Menomonie, Wis., and QMR Plastics Division in River Falls, Wis., are refreshingly humane manufacturing plants that she designed while part of James/Snow Architects before starting her own firm, Julie Snow Architects, Inc., in 1994. The greasy, smelly, dark environment we tend to associate with factories is absent. Light and air and sun permeate the facilities. Walls of glass embrace the rolling Wisconsin countryside at QMR; sunlight flickers through the corridors and conference rooms at Origen; shadows



DON F. WONG

dance about a gridded-steel entrance canopy at Short Run.

Snow's designs are pure modernism—clean lines, uncluttered surfaces, minimal materials efficiently applied. Yet her brand of modernism is comforting and inviting—adjectives not typically used to describe modern architecture.

Her success is credited to her ability find enlightened clients with unique design programs.

The Origen Center, for instance, is an unusual combination of manufacturing plant, conference facility and incubator for small businesses. At Phillips Short Run and QMR, the clients sought to erase the division between labor and management. Thus an interior glass wall allows the business offices and manufacturing facilities to remain visible to each other.

If the buildings sound democratic, that's because the clients have democratic outlooks about work. Snow's own office environment reflects that outlook.

"Everyone works on the genesis of a project," Snow says of her seven-person staff of young architects and designers. "This is a studio-based, project-driven office. Everyone has multiple skills and is interested in all aspects of architecture. We adjust roles according to a project's needs. In building the staff, I look for people with specific skills, but also with a number of different skills so no one is stuck in a single role."

Keeping the office small, Snow focuses the firm's work on design and construction, and brings in consultants and other experts as needed.



DON F. WONG

Award-winning manufacturing designs by Snow include the Phillips Plastics Corporation Short Run Division (top) in New Richmond, Wis., and QMR Plastics (above) in River Falls, Wis.



Her ideal clients are those who offer intellectually creative challenges. Finding those clients appears easy, as seen in two new plumb commissions for the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society Institute and Retreat in Sioux Falls, S.D., and the Minneapolis Police Department Precinct #5 building and community center.

The Good Samaritan Society is the nation's largest nonprofit provider of long-term care for the elderly. The society, perceiving the economic, financial and cultural changes affecting traditional long-term care facilities, has proposed a new Institute and Retreat that will address these issues. Under the initial directive of Dr. Mark Jerstad, who died of cancer this spring, the Institute will be a think tank, bridging the gap between academic study and real-world situations, between small towns and large cities, national problems and international concerns. The Retreat and Institute will draw academics and care providers from a national and international arena, creating a partnership with other communities and organizations.

"Once you build a place, people come to it," Snow says, pointing to the success of Origen Center, which has drawn ever-larger numbers of users since its completion several years ago.

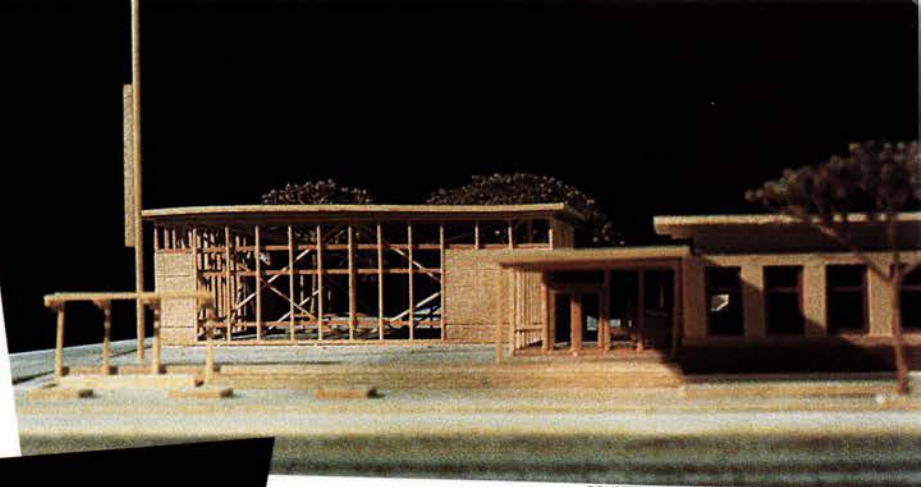
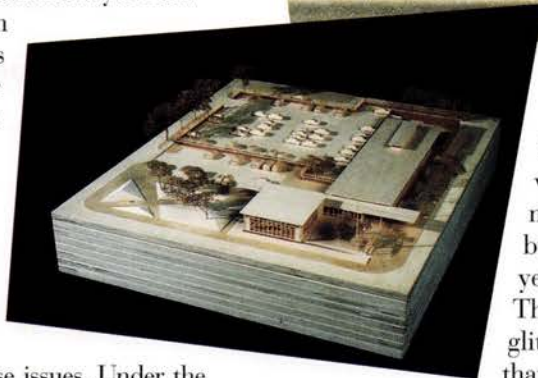
In many other ways, the 50,000-square-foot Retreat and Institute project is similar to the Origen Center in that it provides different functions under one roof. And like the Origen Center, it is set on a rural site where nature and architecture play off each other.

While Snow has a distinctive design signature, she believes that all buildings are a reflection of a client's needs. "So much of what we do as architects is decipher the clients' needs," she says. "A building erupts out of the client's mission."

The Good Samaritan's program called for overnight stay rooms, conference areas, dining, the Institute building, video-production studio, chapel and welcome center. The entire facility will be linked to the Society's original building.

"The project offers us the opportunity to continue our exploration of lightness and transparency, of architecture and nature, and placing people in the landscape," Snow says.

She designed the building as a long, L-shaped structure that surrounds a man-made lake and extensive prairie landscaping by landscape architect Tom Oslund of Hammel Green and Abrahamson. Making extensive use of glass, Snow will infuse the facility with light and nature; all interior rooms will have views of the water and surrounding prairie. Portions of the roof, set atop clerestories, will seemingly float above the structure.



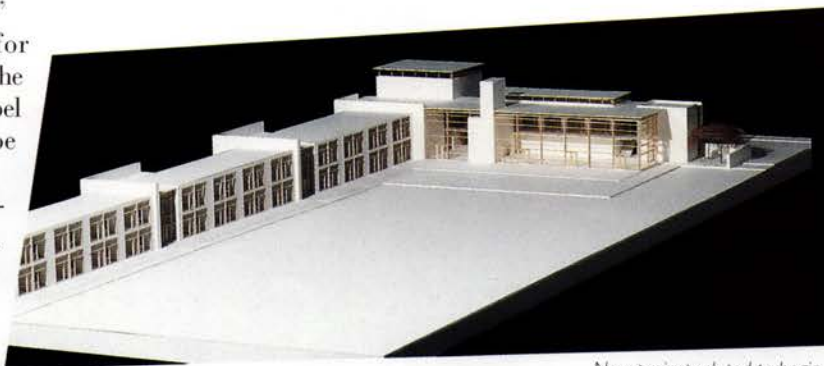
COURTESY JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS

The Minneapolis Police Department Precinct #5 facility, along Nicollet Avenue and 31st Street, will evoke a similar sense of architectural lightness. Here Snow had to surmount a unique hurdle by designing a building that is protected and safe, yet open to the south-Minneapolis neighborhood. The focus is a glass-enclosed community room, a glittering, cube-shaped beacon facing 31st Street that is visually and symbolically open to the neighborhood and an adjacent public plaza, designed by Minneapolis landscape architect Damon Farber. To address the Police Department's safety concerns, Snow sheathed the precinct's main business wing facing Nicollet Avenue in protective brick. Yet it's hardly a stern, authoritarian façade that coldly overlooks the street. A tall band of windows along the one-story wing brightens the face, avoiding the fortress-like effect that undermines many law-enforcement facilities. By combining police functions and community services into one facility, the new precinct building will forge a stronger bond between the neighborhood and police.

Construction is slated to begin this summer on both projects. In each instance, the building reflects a client's belief that architecture can have a positive impact on people and the community.

"We work for people who have innovative ideas about what they want in a building," Snow says.

**E.K**



COURTESY JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS

New projects slated to begin construction this summer are a Retreat and Institute (above) for the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society in Sioux Falls, S.D., and the new 5th Precinct building and community center (top) for the Minneapolis Police Department.





# Vicki Hooper

*Teamwork and  
community-minded  
responsibility drive  
Hooper's career*

**W**hile many young architects strive for independence by breaking out on their own after receiving training at large firms, Vicki Hooper considers herself a team player. She thrives on group involvement and activity.

"I like working within the structure of a firm," says Hooper, a senior project director at Shea Architects in Minneapolis since 1994. "Large firms provide a solid learning experience."

A look at her professional experience since graduating from the University of Kansas, with degrees in environmental design in 1981 and architecture in 1982, attests to her commitment to working for large firms. She's been with some of the Twin Cities's largest, including RSP Architects, where she was part of the design team for such large-scale projects as Kohls stores, and 18 Target stores in 12 states.

At Shea, she's currently working as a project manager for two large-scale projects, the \$5 million master plan to expand and remodel the Gibson/Nagurski Football Complex at the University of Minnesota, and the new 84,000-square-foot Plymouth Ice Arena.

Yet her experience beyond the confines of an office distinguishes Hooper's role as an architect. She believes architects do more than just design buildings.

"I think we have a large social responsibility because our environment plays a big part of our life," Hooper says. "Architecture is a tangible medium. It has an emotional impact on people and it does affect people."

Her social commitment certainly has won her some well-deserved recognition, including a national AIA Young Architects citation in 1993, as well as an AIA Minnesota Young Architects award the same year. The jurors for the national

citation noted that Hooper "has demonstrated the positive effects of an architect working in service for her community."

In 1992 and 1993, she served as a chairperson on the Minnesota Design Team, a grass-roots organization in which architects and designers meet with residents of small towns throughout the state to devise plans for

improving their cities. The Design Team is a real roll-up-your-sleeves endeavor that puts architects in the trenches. In a series of weekend-long charettes, architects



COURTESY SHEA ARCHITECTS





Hooper is involved in design and project management for Whittier Crossroads (opposite) in Minneapolis, and the proposed master plan remodeling and expansion of the Gibson/Nagurski Football Complex (above and left) at the University of Minnesota. Her work on the Minnesota Design Team took her to small-town Waverly (below).



COURTESY SHEA ARCHITECTS

meet with residents of a particular town to discuss community needs and concerns. After touring the town, architects and community members come together at the drawing board, and through a design jam session devise potential urban solutions to problems presented by the residents. "The design team has a can-do attitude," Hooper says.

That can-do attitude inspired her past contribution to the Neighborhood Involvement Program, in which Hooper tutored 5th through 7th graders in basic math and reading skills. Although the tutoring was not architectural, it demonstrated that architects can have a social impact beyond the drawing board.

In her current role as co-chair of the AIA Minneapolis Design and Environment Committee, a member of the AIA Minnesota Board of Directors and immediate-past president of AIA Minneapolis, Hooper continues to promote architects' contributions to the larger community.

"The public thinks of architecture as being a highly valued profession," she says. "Yet we must get more involved. Architects have the skill to do a little about a lot of things."

Certainly those diverse skills influence architects' roles as leaders on the design and construction team, which Hooper sees as being under attack as buildings become bigger and more technically complex. A large-scale construction project involves a team of professionals, from structural engineers to mechanical-systems experts and energy consultants. "We have to recapture our role as leaders of the team," she says.

In the future, she sees taking on larger projects that will offer more complex challenges in terms of programming, scale and detail. She doesn't believe gender plays a role in her ability to



COURTESY MINNESOTA DESIGN TEAM

work with clients, no matter what the project, even a so-called masculine sports facility.

"An architect should meet a client's program, but in a way that the client might not have thought," Hooper says. "Clients are receptive to your ideas if you have good ideas. Connecting with a client has more to do with skill and personality than gender." **E.K.**

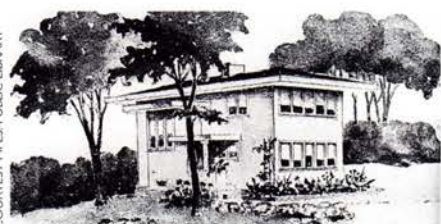


# Women Pioneers

In a male-dominated profession, an ambitious group of individual women struggled to carve niches in the early days of Minnesota's architectural profession • *By Paul Clifford Larson*



COURTESY MHS



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Woman's Baking Company Building (top). The original part of the building, designed by Catherine Fallis, has regularly spaced groups of three windows. Perspective of a 2-story house (center), by Marion A. Parker, 1915, and a single-story house (above), also by Parker, 1915.

Until the present generation of architectural practice, women setting up as architects in Minnesota found themselves in roughly the same position as polar explorers. Every venture into the field started from scratch. There were no tracks to follow, no foundation to build upon, no assurance that even the greatest triumph would open the way to future expeditions.

Not that trekkers into this traditional male territory were lacking in numbers or ability. Beginning in the 1890s, three successive generations of Minnesota architects numbered women among them. But until the end of the Great Depression, their presence was as quiet as it was evanescent. It is doubtful that any knew of those that preceded them, and as a rule their careers evaporated before they had scarcely been established.

Catherine R. Fallis of Minneapolis initiated the 50-year pattern. A daughter of prominent Minneapolis grain commissioner, John R. Fallis, she set up a blueprinting business in the Lumber Exchange Building in 1889. After a year, she moved her offices onto the new 10th floor, this time listing herself as an architect with Addison C. Berry. The partnership of Fallis and Berry lasted just a year, though Fallis herself continued to draft (and apparently design) on a free-lance basis until mid-1894.

Only one product of Fallis's labors has been identified, an admirably clean and crisp—particularly for its period—industrial design commissioned by the Woman's Baking Company in 1893.

Sophie Hayden's Women's Building arose the same year at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. But whereas Hayden strolled into neoclassical territory already conceded to be suspiciously effeminate, the Fallis building struck at the heart of male territory. Erected at the corner of 12th Street and Third Avenue South, it stood under a sequence of names and owners: the Olde Tyme Bakerie, Occident Baking Company, Continental Baking Company and Hostess Cake Bakery.

For most women, the most accessible entry into late-19th century architectural firms was not secretarial—as it would be 40 years later—but artistic. Even the lowest echelon of the business end of the profession was still protected as the first rung on the male ladder; but a woman with superior rendering skills had a chance. How many Minnesota women found their way through that opening can never be determined, for their participation seldom got recorded. In a rare exception, Frank B. Long ordered his daughter Jessie Long's name to be inscribed on the cornerstone of the Municipal Building in Minneapolis as a draftsman who substantially contributed to the finished structure. The city directories simply listed her as a student during the five years that the building plans were being prepared.

Catherine Fallis and Jessie Long's sudden disappearance from public record in 1895 and 1897, respectively, raises a mystery that became commonplace for the foreshortened architectural careers of women to follow. Quite possi-



bly they moved away from the city, a conclusion that, if they were male, would follow quite naturally from the dropping of their names from city directories. But more likely their departure was in name only; by marrying, each would lose her place in the directory, whether or not either continued her drafting practice.

Twenty years passed before another woman made even so much as Fallis and Long's public marks on Minnesota architecture. Just before the First World War, four women rose in the profession, all acquainted with each other's work but each occupying her own distinctive niche.

Mabelle H. Pearse, daughter of a sackman for the Pillsbury "A" Mill, began her career in 1904 as a 21-year-old draftsperson for the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. Around 1910 she set up her own office in her parent's home as a free-lance draftsperson and designer. After the war she established specialties in structural drafting and map making before entering a full-fledged architectural practice with a specialty in houses. This quickly proved either unsuccessful or unsatisfying, for she switched careers in 1925 to run a downtown bookshop. Just before her retirement, at the height of the Great Depression, she returned to engineering drafting, this time for the State Highway Department. Though she never disappeared from city directories and even earned a piece in a short newspaper article on women architects, none of her many drafting and architectural projects have been identified.

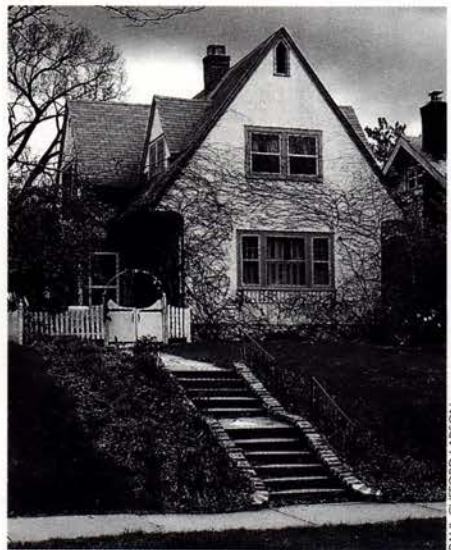
About Marion A. Parker, the second Minnesota—and Minneapolis—woman of the First World War era to enter architecture, considerably more information has come down to us. In 1908, she became Purcell, Feick and Elmslie's first full-time draftsperson, and remained with Purcell and Elmslie until the gradual diminution of their work in mid-1915. For the next eight years she practiced independently, though sharing offices with the remnant of Purcell and Elmslie firm managed by Fred Strauel in the early 1920s. According to Purcell's later recollections, her work was distinguished for its dependability more than its brilliance.

Parker's independent career received an immediate boost from unexpected quarters: a locally produced but widely distributed builder's periodical known as *Keith's Magazine*. Between 1915 and 1917, the magazine published four articles about her work, all but one written by her, and each illustrated by renderings or models of her plans. Two deserve special attention as quite personal variations on Wrightian plans, a task to which much of Purcell and Elmslie's work had been devoted.

A 2-story design developed late in 1915 superficially resembled Wright's famed "Fireproof House for \$5,000" published nine years earlier. But rather than putting the kitchen into the rear, Parker crowded it into a tiny bay that balanced the staircase and vestibule wing. She justified this decision with the appalling heresy against woman's proper place that the kitchen was nothing more than "a little workshop where we hardly do more than rush into it 15 minutes before the meal is to be served and prepare the food, most of it already cooked in some factory for the table."

Her only concession to those actually wanting space in which to cook was a provision for enclosing the porch and placing the refrigerator outside. In a tiny bungalow quaintly called the "Mary and John House," the kitchen was more conventionally located behind the central fireplace wall, but it received equally short shrift. Neither of these plans appear to have been executed, so we can never know whether she was joined in her conspiracy against home cooking.

Parker was more successful with a project developed in partnership with the editor of *Keith's Magazine*, Ethel C. Bartholomew. Almost immediately after Parker left Purcell and Elmslie, she and Bartholomew undertook a commission for the Phi Beta Phi Sorority House near the University of Minnesota. Bartholomew's membership in the sorority probably brought in the commission, but Parker was undoubtedly the designer, for Phi Beta Phi's long ribbon window casements and fretsawn overdoor ornament bear an unmistakable debt to George Grant Elmslie.



PAUL CLIFFORD LARSON

Marion A. Parker house (above), 1920. Dorothy Brink's "French type home" (below), the second-prize winner in the St. Paul Daily News small concrete-masonry house competition, 1927. Citizens Fund Mutual Fire Insurance Company Building (bottom), Red Wing rendering signed by Dorothy Brink Ingemann, ca. 1936.



COURTESY MPLS. PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Secluded in the North Woods, Edwin Lundie's rustic Norcroft provides a writing retreat for women

## Northern muse

By Heather Beal

In her book *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes, "If one prepares a special psychic place...the soul source will hear of it, sense its way to it, and inhabit this place."

Last autumn I found my soul space at Norcroft, a women's writing retreat set on a densely wooded Minnesota hilltop overlooking Lake Superior. In 1948, architect Edwin Lundie designed three buildings—a rustic, timber-frame lodge, a pump house, and a caretaker's cabin—as a summer residence for Ethel Thaxter Clifford, a widow whose husband had never shared her love of Lake Superior's northern shoreline. Mrs. Clifford simply wanted a place where she could relax, play bridge with her best friends and enjoy nature. From the time it was first constructed

until the present day, Norcroft has only been owned and inhabited by women.

In January 1993, Minnesota author and publisher Joan Drury, best known for writing feminist mystery novels, purchased Norcroft with the goal of returning it to its original function as a gathering place for women in the wilderness. (Wilma Adams Smith, the only other owner, used Norcroft as a private retreat.) Drury had been a summer visitor to the Lutsen Resort and surrounding area since her childhood. By restoring Norcroft, she would finally realize a lifelong dream of sharing the inner peace she experienced while on the North Shore with other "women of the pen."

Unfortunately, Norcroft's buildings had fallen into disrepair. A series of fires had scorched the main beam in

the lodge's living room. Years of seasonal use had left the interior wood finishes dingy and dull. The existing insulation consisted of shredded newspaper. And, during Drury's first tour of the facilities, the rooms were packed with years of accumulated clutter. As her first order of business, Drury hired contractor Irving Hansen and his crew of local craftsmen to renovate the lodge and the caretaker's cabin, convert the pump house into a bathing facility and construct four writing sheds. The fifth, handicapped-accessible writing shed, was built later.

The workers removed the existing exterior siding; upgraded the heating, plumbing and electrical systems; replaced the insulation; and added such modern-day amenities to the lodge as a Jacuzzi™ and a dishwasher. They completed the renovation by recladding and painting the building's exteriors. When I asked Kelly Kager, Drury's daughter, what the renovation team used to restore and preserve the lodge's interior, she replied, "Soil-ex and people." Drury's friends and family scrubbed the wood surfaces from floor to ceiling and polished the knotty-pine to a soft, golden glow.

"Wood needs humidity to keep its luster," Kager ex-



HEATHER BEAL

Norcroft and its writing sheds are securely hidden in Minnesota's North Woods (above), alongside Lake Superior (top). The lodge (right) has abundant windows and a deck that run the full length of the lodge, framing views of the lake and its rocky shoreline.







plained. "The lodge needs people living and cooking in it, or the wood will dry out and deteriorate." After spending more than a decade working in office towers where humidity levels are mechanically controlled, I was moved by the image of human beings breathing beauty into a building. With the renovation completed, Drury concentrates on running the private, nonprofit foundation, Harmony Women's Fund of Duluth, which maintains Norcroft.

I arrived at Norcroft at precisely the time when the warm rays of summer were surrendering to the nip of autumn air. The leaves of the trees, the plants and even the weeds were giving their final burst of color before fading into death and dormancy. As a resident, I was assigned a private bedroom and an individual writing shed. My shed was nestled in a stand of birch trees and my bedroom overlooked the shoreline.

This arrangement suited me. I felt as though I was immersed in beauty rather than pointed toward it. I would write for hours without looking up. And when I did, it was only to soak in the stillness of the forest. There was room for little more than a desk, a chair and a glider in my shed. Two shelves held a dictionary,

a thesaurus and a handful of books by African-American writer Zora Neale Hurston. Besides Hurston's books, I was always reminded of the writer because my cabin was named for her. In fact, all the writing cabins carry the name of a woman writer.

When I first arrived, I wrote while listening to classical or New Age music from a tape player. Within a few days, however, I found the intimacy and isolation of my shed soothing. I began to write in silence. The few sounds I did hear were intensified: my pen scratching its way across a page, the clickety clacking of keystrokes, an occasional whoosh of a car speeding by on Highway 61. On windy days, I could hear the whitecaps crashing against the shore. Each evening I looked forward to returning to the lodge and joining the other women near the massive stone fireplace, where we would play board games, share stories, act out scenes from a play or talk about our work. We learned that news of Norcroft passes quietly between women writers. The other residents and I all heard of Norcroft from a friend, although the call for applications is publicly announced each year in the magazine *Poets and Writers*.



A Dutch-door latch (top), and its swirling whimsy, shows Lundie's work down to the smallest detail. The lodge at dusk (above); Norcroft's beauty is primal.

No one seemed to know how long this place had been called "Norcroft." At first, I thought it was absurd to name a place that has existed in the tissue of the trees, in the stone-solid soil and in the imaginations of so many women long before (and after) the architect's pencil met paper. Yet when I learned that "Norcroft" was derived from the Norwegian word for "north" (nor) and the Scottish word for "farm holding" (croft), this name seemed appropriate. It reminded me of how my grandmother's relatives, who had immigrated from Scandinavia to northern Minnesota, told her they were growing rocks in their fields. As a child she believed them because one especially large rock seemed to grow bigger as the soil around it eroded. The

*Continued on page 47*





CHARLES SCOTT



*The open-air museums of Europe are preserving the region's rich architectural heritage*



In Norway is this stave church (top left) and village setting (top right). A farm (above) in Arnhem, the Netherlands, is well-preserved for tourists.

Many travelers to Europe wishing to view national cultural treasures will visit such museums as the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, the National Museum of Berlin or perhaps the Museum of Fine Arts in Vienna. Yet they will miss the treasures of another museum genre—the open-air, vernacular architecture museum, which provides a preserved historical presentation of regional architecture.

The concept of an open-air museum originated in Stockholm in 1891. Also known as “skansen,” the open-air museum is now well known throughout Europe. While traditional museums focus on paintings or sculpture, the open-air museum highlights architecture. The museums provide a setting to view, in close proximity, vernacular architecture from a country's different regions. Many open-air museums develop on a site already housing significant regional architecture, but often buildings from other sites are brought in, restored and opened to the public.

The opportunity to visit these museums, whether in Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary or elsewhere in Europe, requires a good road map. Part of the



touring enjoyment is simply getting there. Often the museums' locations are remote, so you must sidestep public transportation or the rails and rent a car instead. Sight-seeing opportunities are enhanced by taking winding roads through small villages, between fields of tulips, over mountainous ranges or past bluish-green fjords. Another ancillary delight is discovering the local cuisine served at each gasthaus or cafe along the way. Outside the cafes, the local open-air marketplaces reveal insight into the villages' customs and history.

Once you arrive at an open-air museum, you will discover an orderly grouping of architecture, as the museums arrange buildings or clusters of buildings into settings that recall their original location. Thus the visitor circulates through various architectural groupings, experiencing each distinctive site as a self-contained exhibit.

For instance, the site for a windmill amongst tulip fields in the Netherlands's open-air museum is quite different from a setting provided for an ornate wooden storehouse found in the mountainous region of the Folk Museum at Lillehammer, Norway, or from the whitewashed-adobe and wattle-walled homes of the Hungarian Great Plain. A 13th-century Norwegian stave-church, as another example, was moved to the Norwegian Folk Museum at Bygdoy in Oslo and placed at the crest of a hill. Away from a view of other architectural objects, the setting for the stave-church suggests its original location on the hillsides near Gol, Norway.



The buildings' placement alongside each other illuminates the development of regional characteristics. At Bygdoy, different buildings reveal the evolution of Norway's vernacular architecture, from the 13th-century, wooden stave structures to the "Old Town" brick houses of Oslo from the 17th to 19th centuries.

Many open-air museums, however, limit their presentation to a specific region, rather than presenting a broad



Vernacular architecture on display includes the thatch-roof, post-and beam structure (above) and wooden out-house (left), both in Kommern, Germany. Other buildings are a church (below) and rural structures (below left) in Szentendre, Hungary.



*Continued on page 47*





1



2



3

- 1 FARGO, N. D.
- 2 EDNA G. TUGBOAT, TWO HARBORS, MINN.
- 3 DULUTH, MINN.
- 4 KNAUER'S MARKET, MAIN STREET, AUSTIN, MINN.
- 5 BARN BLUFF, RED WING, MINN.





4

## *Outstate quietude*

In the stillness of winter's brittle predawn light, photographer Mike Melman adjusts his lens on the small towns of Minnesota and the Dakotas, where daybreak will ignite the engines that churn these industrial and commercial outposts.



5



having to ever identify it as knowledge. Like when you're sewing and no one tells you you're doing an overhand stitch; you just observe it and do it. That's what it was like in architecture school. People would imitate their professors and learn by doing what the professor suggested, without literally talking about it.

In the last 20 years, however, those of us in architecture have become aware that there is a knowledge base, and we can actually be explicit about what we're teaching and studying. Along with that has come architectural research to develop a knowledge base so we can be more convincing in the way we present our ideas.

**In the last 20 years, has academia changed in its attitudes toward women architects, as well?**

First of all, in the '60s, as everyone became more aware of social issues (and not just issues related to women), there was an awareness of the problems of the profession; namely, the problem of middle-class people practicing with middle-class values and designing for people not in the middle class. To me, the televised destruction of St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe—the first embodiment in the United States of Corbusier's "Radiant City"—epitomized the moment when we realized we were operating in a problematic situation as architects. It created an era of crisis and questioning, and initiated a trend in academia to include the social sciences as a part of architectural training.

Another thing that influenced change was the interest in historic preservation. As I've said, architecture as it was practiced up until the '60s was based on an apprenticeship model: It was who you knew that allowed you to have success, and men in charge most often selected other men as their mentees. So women were looking for other ways in which they could have a voice outside of the traditional modes of practicing architecture. When historic preservation came to the fore, it required a new sort of expertise that people would look to. This allowed any ar-

chitect—not just women—who wasn't necessarily normative to develop an expertise and acquire legitimacy.

At the same time, feminism and architectural theory were opening up. There was new interest in finding work done by women, and an interest among women in promoting the work of other women. That, in turn, created opportunities for women as writers and theoreticians in academia.

**How about the architecture school's attitudes toward educating women? Has that changed at all?**

The attitude toward educating everybody has changed. We've become much more systematic in the way we present the architectural problem. Architecture is not just design, it's also an argument. And you have to have evidence to support your argument. People must state objectives and criteria for evaluation very clearly. There is no longer a silent ability to weed people out. Today, you have to be explicit about why you're weeding people out. And that makes people aware of their bias, as well as someone else's bias. Also, in most studios today significant attention is paid to scholarly work and research knowledge that informs the design, so design isn't based on a person's aesthetic sense only.

**Do you see women like yourself still breaking down barriers in architecture schools today?**

There are many barriers to be broken. Women are not yet fully accepted as administrators, which has to do with how people see authority and who's able to hold a position of authority. There's also the bias of students. Women often wield a different kind of authority that isn't as visible and some women have a different leadership style in the studio. Because it isn't the normative approach, students don't always appreciate it. And within academia, we often do not receive credit for our accomplishments.

**Throughout your career as an architect and academician, have you seen women change architecture in a design sense?**

The validation of the ordinary and domestic environment has happened in large part due to the theoretical issues women have brought forth. When I was

a student, design had no relation to the ordinary person's house or the values ordinary people have. Women coming into the field have made people aware of some of the social issues embedded in an ordinary house that need to be brought into high-style residential design. There's also been a softening of institutional environments as women have brought attention to issues about habitation.

Also, women and other ethnic minorities bring other perspectives to the field, have different senses of what's beautiful and appropriate, and often see that what's considered "right" isn't correct and has real flaws. Architecture has been so normative in terms of middle-class values and aesthetics. There's a lot of work that still needs to be done on understanding why we like what we like. So when a stark building is considered aesthetically beautiful and lay people don't appreciate it, this raises questions like, "Whose aesthetic is this?"

**And women and other cultural groups are starting to break down those assumptions?**

That's right. Breaking down assumptions is critical because the field of architecture will die if it doesn't begin to respond to a broader set of values. We've gotten so far away from what people really like and want. How do we train architects to listen to the needs and wants of their clients and not just impose aesthetic values on them? Who is architecture's public? For a lot of architects it's only the cognoscenti. I have no objection to designing for that group, as long as there's some acknowledgment that the needs of other people can't be ignored.

Architecture is first a cultural communication; second, an artistic mode. For most people in the profession, it's still the other way around. As architects, we have to be more sensitive to the culture in which we operate, and accommodate and understand and reinterpret that culture for people. We need to work with people, not against them, and in the process help them understand what we're doing and how we're trying to make our built environment better.

AM



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Spring Preview 1997  
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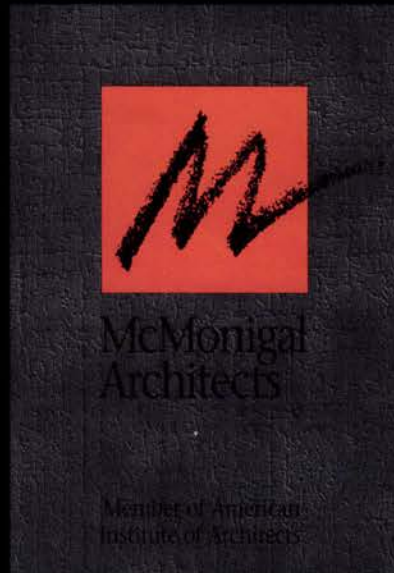
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### Kitchen Remodeling

*Orono, MN*

In this kitchen wing remodeling, the new owners of a 1936 French Norman Manor wanted to recapture the warmth and elegance of the original house as well as create a modern, informal gathering place for family and friends. Designed by Laurel Ulland with Steve Mooney. Interiors by Marie Meko. Construction by Ken Durr and Associates.



### Susanka/Larson House

*St. Paul, MN*

So what do architects build for themselves? Sarah Susanka and architect husband Jim Larson collaborated to make a house that is both comfortable and tailored to their informal lifestyle. And with enough bookshelves to empty *all* the boxes! Designed by Sarah Susanka and Jim Larson, and built by CA Johnson.



### Westhoff Lake Home

*Cedar Lake, MN*

This lake home combines living, dining and kitchen spaces into a comfortable, casual retreat; views to the lake are embraced through a wall of glass while a stone fireplace warms gatherings in any season. An open stair winds around the fireplace and leads to a loft and bedrooms tucked under the roof. Designed by Jean Larson and Dale Mulfinger and built by Erotas Building Corporation.



### L'Eaubelle...Beautiful Water

*Deephaven, MN*

This gabled cottage provides glimpses of beautiful water through the tree canopy on its Deephaven site. A whimsical treehouse playspace shaded by awnings perches above the garage. Designed for a family of four who love to dance, by Michaela Mahady, Wayne Brnum, and Steve Mooney. Built by McNulty Construction.

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continues to become more accepting and welcoming of women, so are women architects exercising their influence and making their impact felt. Gender neutral or not, the architectural profession is changing as more women claim membership in this long-exclusive club. One change in the profession has been a steady proliferation of small firms started by women, sometimes in cooperation with spouses. Women often create their own firms so that they can acquire experience, build credentials and manage employees in a flexible workplace that allows them to juggle home, career and children.

"Those of us with our own firms maybe tend to be more informal because we're dealing with a lot of unknowns from day to day," says Ostberg, whether those unknowns are sick kids or client demands. "Staggered hours, flexible hours are all possible in the work environment because of more women in the field."

In addition to more flexible attitudes about work hours and vacations, Krisan Osterby-Benson, senior landscape architect with Ellerbe Becket, has seen another change in the office culture of her large firm as a result of women entering the profession. "When I first came here 10 years ago, it was not unusual to see the swimming-suit issue of *Sports Illustrated* on desks and questionable postcards hung on peoples' bulletin boards," she recalls. "That's vanished."

Having equal numbers of women and men in the offices of Mulfinger, Susanka, Mahady & Partners has created a "gender equilibrium" and a less autocratic management approach, says Sarah Susanka. "We tend to share our thoughts about a direction and don't come to consensus exactly, but we're much more conciliatory in our decision making," Susanka explains. She also says that "the female tendency to try to find a way to make everyone feel they're an important part of the firm" is actually a skill that could "reinvigo-

rate the profession."

The focus on star architects, she explains, has created a morale problem in the profession; many architects feel undervalued and thus are less likely to be vested in a firm.

"Women have the ability to look at everybody in a firm, recognize that some people feel vested and some do not, and do something about it to ensure everyone can be a creative force," Susanka says. "That part of our personalities can really make a difference." Although, she adds, "it won't happen on a large scale until more women are in more management roles."

In addition to the office environment, many women architects claim

ture—the creation of space and places that cater to the user in a way that big-scale architecture doesn't. Architecture performed by women has a quality that is more responsive to the individual using that space. Obviously men do this very well, too. But with women architects, the person and the building work together, rather than architecture dominating the person."

Women are also contributing another element critical to the practice of architecture in the 21st century: diversity.

"Greater diversity in any office contributes to the life of that office by increasing activities, points of view, life experiences and educational backgrounds," Osterby-Benson says. As

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*As American culture becomes more pluralistic,  
the profession must mirror that pluralism.  
"A design team with diverse backgrounds and  
values can better establish a rapport and working  
relationship with a diverse group of clients."*

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—Krisan Osterby-Benson

that women bring sensitivity to the design process and to relationships with clients.

"Maybe it's more a sense of cooperation," Ostberg says. "But it's important to the overall project, because, while obviously good design is important, it also has to function, and if you're not sensitive to a specific function and the client's use of it, then it's not a successful project."

In terms of design, Andersen says, "Women add a sensitivity to spaces, the design of them, the softness of them," especially in health-care settings and corporate spaces for women.

Adds Susanka, "The personal has become more important in architec-

American culture becomes more pluralistic, the profession must mirror that pluralism. "A design team with diverse backgrounds and values can better establish a rapport and working relationship with a diverse group of clients," Osterby-Benson adds. "When the profession does not match the diversity growing in society, we're doing clients a disservice. We can't do as good a job if we can't understand the issues."

Andersen, in fact, uses the fact that she's a woman with her own firm as a marketing tool. "I'm seeing more women decision makers in the marketplace—especially women bankers and facility managers—and it helps them a lot if they're working with a woman



they can dialogue with during projects," Andersen says. "I guide them through construction, I interface with contractors and translate for them, and I help these women internally maintain their status. They appreciate it and it's fun for me."

Advancing to the status of decision maker in a large architectural firm, however, is still an elusive goal for many women architects.

"I don't know if the glass ceiling is purposeful, or if it's still coming from the sense that it takes experience to get into these positions and traditionally, because there have been fewer women than men in the profession, there are less women to arrive in these positions," Osterby-Benson speculates.

Similarly, one wonders where the female Edwin Lundie or Ralph Rapson is today.

"Numbers," Blumentals says. "Those guys didn't hatch overnight. They were a handful amongst thousands and thousands. A case of percentages that you find in anything. Locally, however, Elizabeth Close wracked up some pretty good stuff, and she was one of the first female architects to become licensed in the state of Minnesota."

Adds Andersen, "I don't much care for the star system. We're team players. I want to see good projects for good clients done by a good group of people. I just know it takes too many people to put a building together to rely on the star system anymore."

What lies ahead for women architects in the next century?

"I'm hoping to see more women climbing the steel, writing specs, doing construction administration," Andersen offers. "The technical ranks are still much more a male domain, and I'm hoping I'll see more women confident with bricks and mortar, as well as producing strong design. Women should be able choose from a broad spectrum of specialties. There's still a great deal of surprise about the type of architect I am. When I'm out at a job site in my boots climbing steel, people get a whole new mindset." **AM**

## pioneers

*Continued from page 33*

Though less of a household name than her brother, famed editorial cartoonist Charles L. ("Bart") Bartholomew, E.C. Bartholomew had already made her mark in architectural circles. Born in Des Moines, she practiced architecture in Boston and New York before coming to Minneapolis to edit a short-lived technical periodical, *Construction Details*. When she took over editorship of *Keith's Magazine* in 1915, the magazine immediately became an important venue for women's voices, if not women's work, in architecture. During her brief tenure at the helm in 1915 and 1916, she featured projects of two prominent women architects in New England as well as Marion Parker; exercised her considerable knowledge of historical architectural models with articles on California Mission Revival architecture and the Pierce-Nichols house in Salem; and introduced a regular column on kitchen planning and furnishing by Edith M. Jones, a leading specialist in that still-struggling new field.

What Bartholomew accomplished as an independent architect has not been determined. She remained with *Keith's Magazine* until 1923, though in a succession of subsidiary roles. She finished her career at the fringes of the architectural profession as a model builder. Her obituary in 1937 cited her active participation in the Minneapolis Woman's Club and her founding role in the establishment of a retirement colony for University of Minnesota professors near Lake Wales, Fla.

Marion Parker, in the meantime, anticipated Purcell's lapse into picturesque residential work of the English Cottage variety. As early as 1915, when she was barely out from under Purcell and Elmslie's wings, she had designed a decidedly non-Prairie School residence called Twin Gables for long-time Purcell and Elmslie contractor F.N. Hegg. Her local career climaxed in 1920 with her own house, a steeply gabled cottage in the Linden Hills neighborhood. Parker's major source of income through these years was probably not



Detail of Phi Beta Phi Sorority, Marion A. Parker and Ethel C. Bartholomew, 1916.

an architectural practice in the full sense, but consultation work as a home planner and decorator. This became an increasingly common expedient for women who found it difficult to acquire commissions as full-fledged architects.

While Parker and Bartholomew were struggling to define careers at what was becoming a female backwater of mainstream architectural practice, another Parker found work by plunging herself into the maelstrom. In 1915 Blanche M. Parker installed herself as president and treasurer of the newly formed Parker Home Construction Company. Her husband, realtor James M. Parker, sold what she designed and built. Together, in a variety of shifting capacities, they hopped from house to house in south Minneapolis for about a decade before retiring or moving from the state around 1925.

With the graduation of the University of Minnesota's first women architecture students in 1922, the prospects for women succeeding in the profession may have seemed to brighten considerably. But much the same struggle for acceptance and progress within the profession remained. Edna Croft was instantly able to find work with Croft and

*Continued on page 46*



Boerner, a flourishing firm established by her brother. The new Minneapolis Auditorium Building was likely to have been among the first projects that engaged her talents. But even with her brother's presence and a long string of school commissions, she was unable to weather the Depression with her career unscathed. Three times in the 1930s she had to leave the drawing board for year-long stints as first an office clerk, then as treasurer and finally as bookkeeper. In 1937 she left the firm—and perhaps the practice—altogether. Fellow graduate Alice Vivien Little may have fared better, but her eventual fate has not been established. Upon her graduation, architecture-department chairman Frederick M. Mann immediately engaged her for a year as draftsman, a distinction he commonly reserved for outstanding students who had been unable to find work. From Mann's office she went to the Architect's Small House Service Bureau for a year, and from there to parts and vocations unknown—perhaps to a marriage that removed her name from readily accessed records. A third woman graduate of 1922, Catherine M. Smit of St. Paul, moved with her family to California before establishing a profession locally.

Throughout the remainder of the 1920s, women graduating in architecture shared much the same fate as the class of 1922. Eunice Virginia Nielson was immediately hired by the new firm of Lang, Raugland and Lewis, but she descended from draftsman to stenographer in 1932. Upon leaving the firm in 1936, she drifted through a variety of positions as clerk, stenographer, statistician and, finally, private secretary. Marie Guessmer began as a designer for stained-glass makers Weston and Leighton, struggled through the Depression as an artist and decorator, and finally settled into clerical work for the state. Not even this much is known about the architectural careers of half a dozen

other women achieving architecture degrees in the 1920s.

Perhaps the single brightest career among all these early, credential-carrying women architects was enjoyed by Dorothy Brink. In 1925, she found employment with young and rising St. Paul architect William M. Ingemann, whom her daughter later claimed ran the only local firm willing to take on a woman. Two years after joining Ingemann, Brink made St. Paul headlines by winning the second prize in a newspaper-sponsored architectural competition for "a small concrete masonry

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*Although  
women found work  
in architecture,  
they often lacked  
recognition within  
the firms that  
employed them.*

---

house." The accompanying article began with the declaration "Women make good architects" and proceeded to give her three paragraphs before mentioning the first-prize winner, a draftsman for Ellerbe and Company. William Ingemann's submission took a lowly third. This situation would not be repeated, for four months later Brink and Ingemann were married, and thereafter no office renderings but watercolors bore her signature.

Brink's competition entry bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Ingemann's, indicating artistic and conceptual affinities that would fuel a successful partnership for more than 30 years. Her evident fondness for the interplay

of formal composition and domestic, even cottagelike, scaling was obviously shared by her employer/husband. It also was of one piece with the work of other women of the period who had risen to prominence in the profession, such as Julia Morgan in San Francisco and Mary Rockwell Hook in Kansas City.

Several other women succeeded in establishing long careers working for other architects during the 1920s and 1930s. Emma F. Brunson, the first woman to be registered as an architect in Minnesota in 1921, achieved a quiet coup by having herself listed for 14 years as a draftsman in the city directory independently of her husband's listing as an engineer. Margharita Tarr, a graduate of Iowa State University, was registered in 1935 as Minnesota's first woman landscape architect, capping a seven-year tenure in Morrell and Nichols's office. Were more about these architects' careers known, their status as "firsts" would likely be relegated to footnotes.

The one key element lacking in these women's careers was their lack of identity within the offices that employed them. Even so able a designer as Brink was destined forever to be cited as William Ingemann's assistant or draftsman, her role as co-architect or even lead architect on many of the firm's projects known only to those most intimately aware of the workings of his office. For the long-lasting public success of a woman in architecture, Minnesota had to await the beginning of another partnership.

When Austrian-born Elizabeth Scheu and Winston Close initiated their long and fruitful professional relationship in 1938, a pioneering woman architect finally grasped the opportunity to plant a flag that stuck. The strongest indication of Elizabeth Scheu Close's success and that of the many women who practice in the state today is that their work is no longer regarded as a triumph for women, but simply as the achievement of very good architects.

AM



## **northern**

*Continued from page 35*

forms and materials of Norcroft's buildings are so true to their environs they seem to have emerged from the ground in this manner. Each evening, as I approached the lodge, I had trouble distinguishing its foundation from the earth, its walls from the night air, its roof from the sky. Months later, as I flash the slides of Norcroft across my living room wall and share my experiences with friends and family, I am reminded of the words of the artist Gita Kar: "When you leave your homeland, what was permanent on the outside becomes permanent on the inside. You carry places with you in your heart—in your soul."

Norcroft is "hjemlandet," the homeland, for me. It resides somewhere between the one-room cabin where my grandfather was raised in the Norwegian countryside and the shoreline of Lake Mille Lacs, where I spent summers with my family. Norcroft always will remain a place of peace and euphony that hushes a cacophonous world and speaks to me in whispers. **AM**

changes occur within short distances, just as dialects vary because of political, social, ethnic or geographic circumstances.

Not all open-air museums in Europe were established primarily as preservation showcases. The Hungarian open-air museum at Szentendre, located near Budapest by the Danube Bend region, was originally initiated upon the turn-of-the century theory that the vernacular architecture of a country may serve as inexpensive and practical housing for the masses. Although efforts to establish a national open-air museum were launched during the Budapest Millenary Exhibition in 1896, the social upheaval of two World Wars, economic depression and communism delayed Hungary's full realization of its goals.

Yet over the decades, numerous scholars, architects, historians, artists and others were strong proponents of developing open-air museums. Among these was Karoly Kos (1883-1977), a Hungarian architect, urban designer and writer, known for his turn-of-the-century architecture, precedent-setting New Urbanism, drawings of vernacu-

lar Hungarian architecture and architectural writings. As seen in Kos's writings, the purpose of examining different architecture and cultures is to understand the efforts people made "to create a community in which they could retain their own characteristics." Kos's particular interest was the Hungarian Kingdom's architecture before the First World War.

Now rebuilding after the end of the Cold War, Hungary is establishing skanzens throughout the country, perhaps to serve as a precedent for new housing types recalling traditional Hungarian architecture. The work by such contemporary Hungarian architects as Imre Makovecz and Sandor Devenyi certainly reflects traditional precedents.

The open-air museum today maintains a historic richness that is beneficial for a diverse public. It presents an endangered vernacular architectural form, provides information concerning the development of building genres, establishes historical precedents for present and future reflection concerning architecture, provides a window into past cultures, and restores and protects national architectural treasures. **AM**

## **travelogue**

*Continued from page 37*

national cross-section. This is particularly common in Germany and Hungary. The Museumdorf at Cloppenburg, Germany, preserves the culture of the surrounding Emsland area, with windmills, farm buildings and other rural structures represented. These rural architectural examples vary from those in the Scandinavian countries. Typically, a half-timbered barn in Emsland is combined with the house all under one roof, whereas in Norway and Sweden the farmstead consists of a cluster of several buildings. Size is also a factor, as the half-timbered barn/house in Emsland is substantially larger than its counterpart in other countries.

The building materials, while often similarly utilized, may vary from country to country and region to region depending on availability. Often stylistic



*Post-and-beam construction with wattle and daub, Kommern, Germany.*

CHARLES SCOTT



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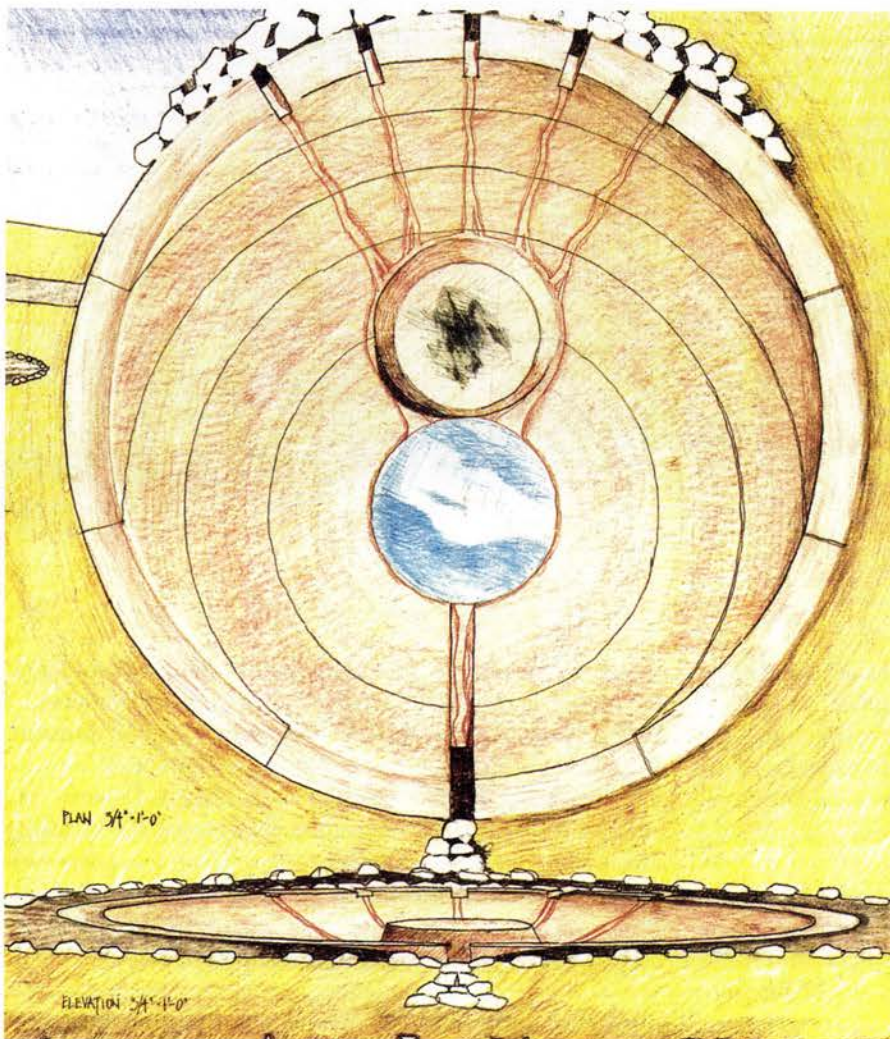
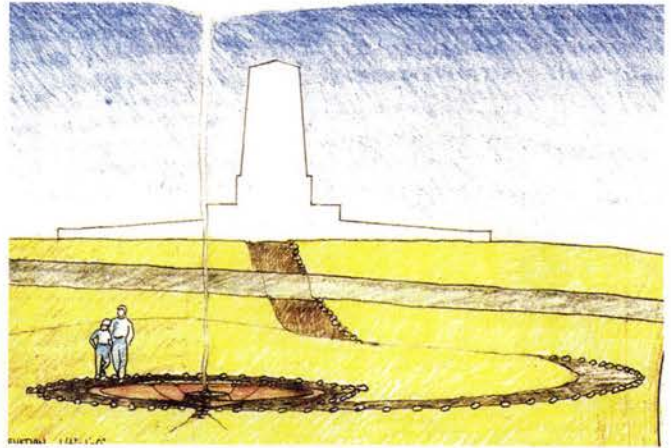


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# Peace Through Unity: An Indian Memorial

Jeffrey Mandyc and  
Darryl Pratte



Law signed by President George Bush on Dec. 10, 1991, renamed Custer Battlefield National Monument in Montana as Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

In recognition of this renaming, a national competition for a new monument and memorial was proposed to recognize the American Indians who fought to preserve their land and culture in the Battle of Little Bighorn, waged on June 25-26, 1876.

Among the competition submissions was this proposal by two Minnesota designers. In Mandyc and Pratte's scheme, a stone-marked earthen trail follows alongside the ridge of the memorial to the north. Upon reaching the memorial, the path spirals down and away from the ridge, enhancing the experience of the prairie.

Within the memorial, a red stone dish is nestled between the spine of the ridge and an arm of the ridge reaching to the northeast. The memorial's section is the impression left by a sphere set on the earth. A raised portion touching the center of the memorial, carved from the red stone, is for ceremonial fires. Wind sends the ashes skyward over the historic battle site, depositing them throughout valley and along the banks of the Little Bighorn River.

Five notches—one for each tribe that fought in the battle—collect rainwater rushing down the ridge. Five streams of water flow over the memorial, around the ceremonial stone and collect in a pool at the base of the dish. One stream, representing the united tribes, flows out the north to nurture the earth. The remaining pool of water, equal in diameter to the ceremonial stone, shares the center point of the memorial with the ceremonial stone.





Plaza Hotel, 1700 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, 1906-1960.

For years, the juncture of Lyndale and Hennepin avenues at the foot of Lowry Hill in Minneapolis was known simply as “the bottleneck”—a jam-up of autos and streetcars. In an effort to clean up the traffic problems and permit Interstate 94 to burrow beneath the area, engineers redesigned the streetscape in 1960. They also ended the life of a hotel full of character.

The Plaza was built in 1906 by Walter J. Keith. It occupied most of an island in the Hennepin-Lyndale intersection, at Kenwood Parkway. To the east was Loring Park, and to the west were the Kenwood Gardens (now the site of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden).

Sedate on the outside, the 175-room Plaza betrayed aspirations of elegance. A dining room with hanging tapestries, a gold-leaf ceiling and floor-to-ceiling mirrors offered formal meals nightly. The grand assembly room was filled with wicker furniture. For a few years, a rooftop garden unveiled splendid views of the park. Italian tenor Enrico Caruso stayed at the Plaza, as did Sarah Bernhardt. The hotel generated its own

electricity, operated a genteel speakeasy during Prohibition, and hosted many of Minneapolis’s most glittery social events.

The Plaza plodded through the years, its water pressure dropping, its clientele becoming more residential and its glamour fading. In 1955 a new owner, Fred A. Ossanna, Jr., completed a \$400,000 renovation that gutted the building, added a new restaurant called the Aztec Room (complete with an “Aztec sun disc”), changed the hotel’s name to the Park Plaza, and furnished the guest rooms with Formica tables. The Caruso Suite went for \$30 a night, and all of the hotel maids received make-up and grooming instruction. Ossanna’s plans for further improvements ended when he was convicted of skimming illegal profits from his earlier involvement with the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Co.

The Plaza spent a short time as a residential club for senior citizens, but then Interstate 94 roared into town. With the payment of \$695,000 to its owners, demolition began in November 1960. I-94’s northern entry into the Lowry Hill tunnel now occupies the site.

*Jack El-Hai*