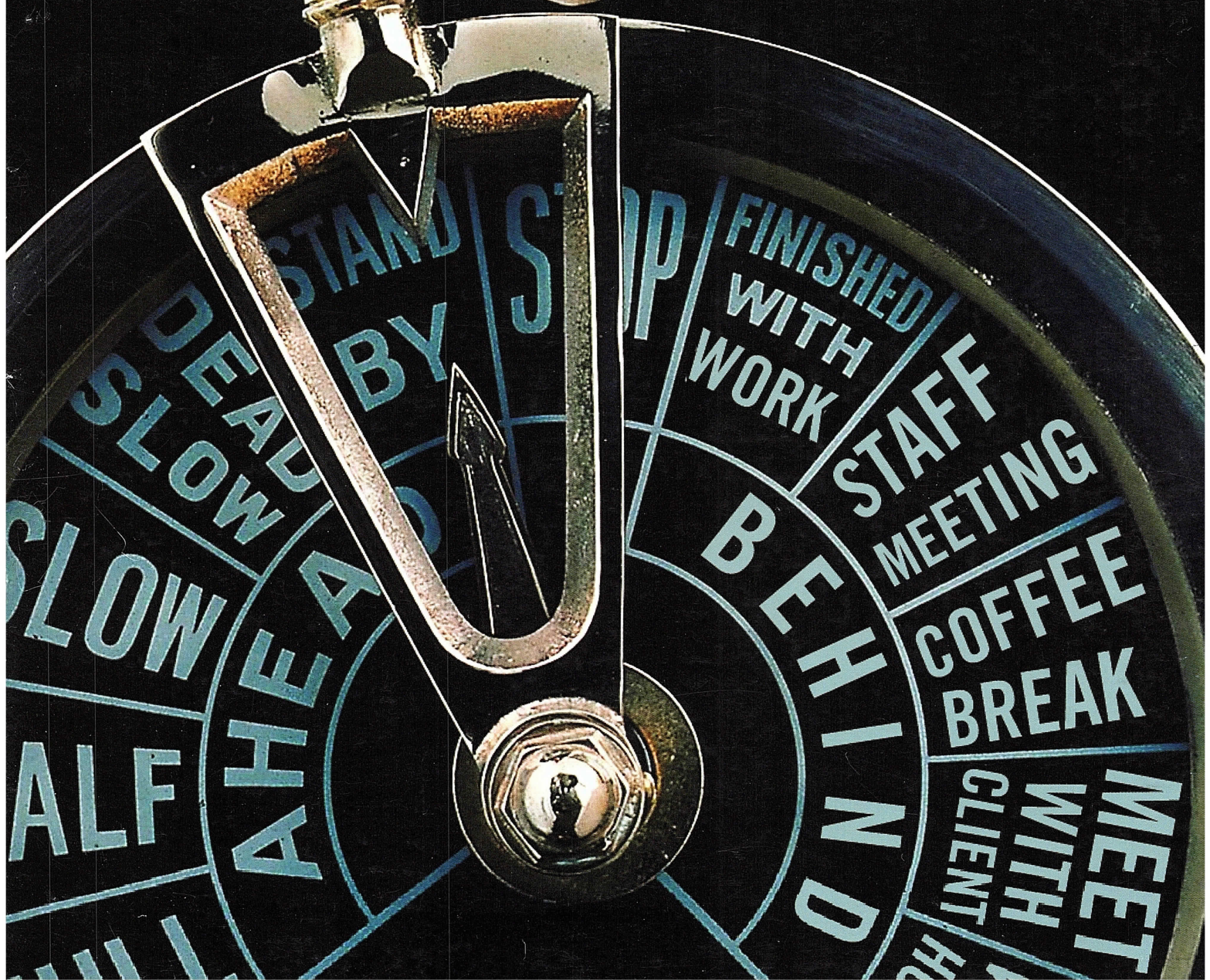


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# QUIUS

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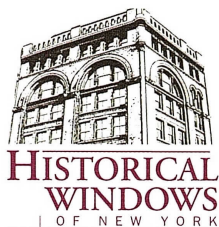




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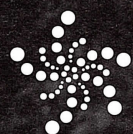




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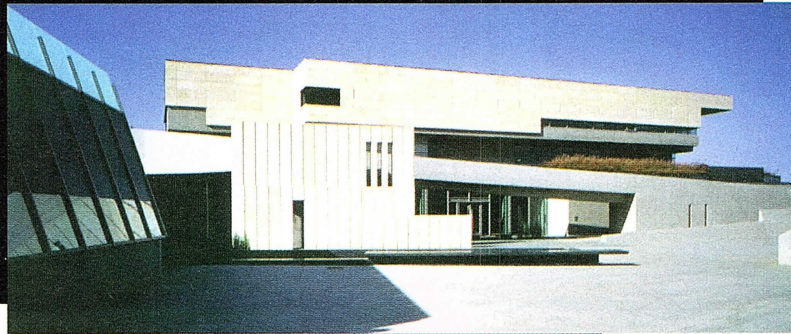


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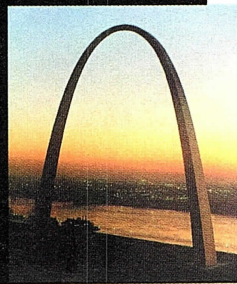
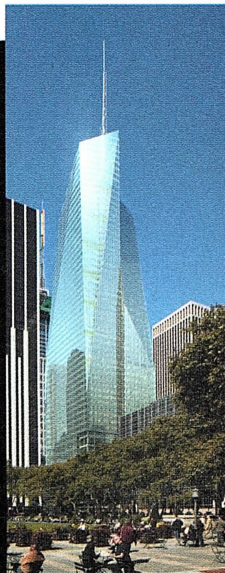
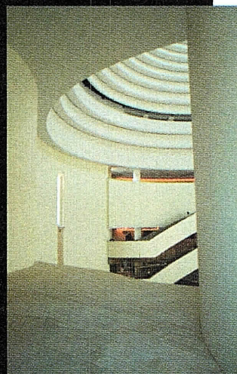
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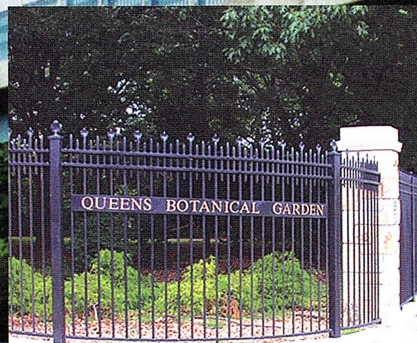


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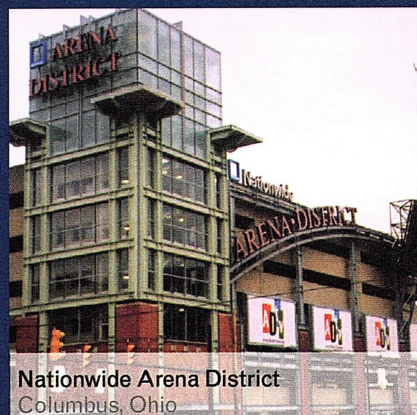
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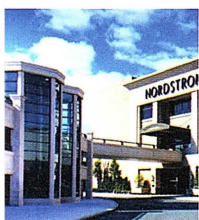
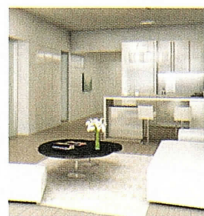
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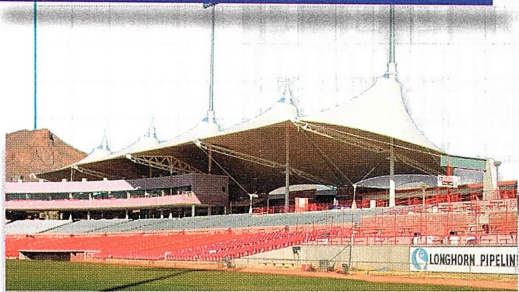
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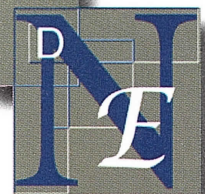


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# International Practice: A Tale from Torino

First Words  
Letter from the President

We are living in an exciting time when architectural practice around the world is increasingly connected. This was demonstrated at this year's UIA (Union of International Architects) Triennial Congress in Torino, Italy, which I attended with AIAANY Executive Director Rick Bell, FAIA. Given the theme "Transmitting Architecture," the event drew 9,000 architects, urban planners, and policy makers from around the world, who came together to share best practices, compare notes, and find common agendas.

In two panels on sustainable cities and urban landscape, Rohit T. Aggarwalla, director of the NYC Office of Long-term Planning & Sustainability, placed Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC in a global context while showing how its urban agenda will outlive this mayoral administration. Representatives from Tokyo, Milan, and São Paulo presented plans for their own cities in response to very different urban conditions. What binds the initiatives are common goals not unlike those of PlaNYC: affordable housing; transportation and infrastructure; clean energy and air; education; and outdoor space, to name a few. The populist message of a fairly elastic participation – panels often lasted four hours with up to 12 speakers and shifting audiences – stressed the universality of diverse practices. As observed by AIA President Marshall Purnell, FAIA, who led the U.S. delegation, we can all learn from different ways of doing things.

In his "Lectio Magistralis" keynote address, Peter Eisenman, FAIA, expanded on the remarks he made at the AIA New York Design Awards Luncheon earlier this year. Eisenman led 5,000 young architects to an understanding of how contextualism includes transitional spaces, not objects plopped into the landscape. He described his project, City of Culture of Galicia, in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, noting that the journey was more significant than the arrival. UIA President Gaétan Siew pointed out that while star architecture may dominate the global media, the many practitioners who have their feet closer to the ground are finding their own way based on local context. Architects, no matter their home or base of operations, are remarkably similar in approach.

Rick and I also found much in common with individual participants. On the first evening we were welcomed by the Mexican delegation, which included Teodoro Gonzáles de León, the UIA Gold Medal recipient, and his colleague, José Luis Cortés Delgado, who was instrumental in bringing the "Mexico City Dialogues" exhibition to our Center for Architecture in 2005. We compared notes on our respective architectural associations and met our counterparts from different countries. We soon realized that the language of architecture – drawing on paper napkins and a few universal expressions – was sufficient to communicate over dinner with Nazarov Renat Irisbekovich from Tashkent, who spoke only Russian. It was evident that while architects occupy vastly different terrains, we share common aspirations.



McCullar at the UIA Congress in Torino, with UIA Vice Chair José Luis Cortés Delgado, Gold Medalist Teodoro Gonzáles de León, and his wife, Eugenia Sarre

Centers for architecture, we learned, are flourishing everywhere. When Rick presented our Center for Architecture at the Urban Centers Worldwide panel, it was gratifying to see our many programs and exhibitions transmitted in an international forum. In Torino itself, the Urban Center Metropolitano, supported by the city and local institutions, occupies part of a former 19th-century train repair shed, with 65,000 square feet of exhibition, program, and outdoor spaces, including a cafe and playground. These centers provide vital grassroots support for the urban design initiatives that are transforming contemporary cities.

The UIA Congress was much like our 2008 UN Forum on Sustainable Urbanization in the Information Age, but on a larger scale that brings people together in ways that are grounded in political reality and practical inspiration. The Center for Architecture exhibitions, such as "Berlin – New York Dialogues: Building in Context" and "Building China: Five Projects, Five Stories," do the same.

Rick and I were among the few AIA participants in Torino, but we were inspired to imagine a larger AIA and New York City presence at the next UIA Congress in Tokyo in 2011.

James McCullar, FAIA,  
2008 President, AIA New York Chapter

RICK BELL





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- Promote an appreciation of New York's unique urban fabric
- Inspire community values and provide fellowship opportunities
- Promote cultural tourism of New York City's architecture



# Busier But Behinder

A Word from the Editor

“The faster I work, the behinder I get.” It may be an old chestnut of an adage, but it’s one that frequently whizzes through my brain – usually at the end of a day when I see so few items on my to-do list checked off. It makes me wonder when all the whiz-bang high-speed technology that’s supposed to help me be more productive and creative will actually do that.

In this issue of *Oculus* we take a look beyond the reception areas of New York architectural firms to see how they encourage productivity and creativity in an industry that could be heading into precarious times. Despite the fact that everyone is a potential competitor, this is an industry based very much on collaboration, both within and outside a firm. A map by cartographer Martha Bell graphically illustrates where Manhattan architects tend to “cluster.” Space constraints limited the view to Manhattan, and we don’t claim it to be comprehensive (data was gleaned from the AIA New York Chapter’s membership directory), but it certainly does indicate clusters of firms in both established and emerging neighborhoods.

The reasons each chose to locate where it did are as different as the firms. We go behind the scenes to find out why they set up shop where they did, and how they use their spaces as a tool to build both the business and a supportive office culture. But it takes more than a great space, no matter how well designed, to establish an environment that nurtures not only productivity, but dedication and loyalty. It’s a difficult balance to find in these fast times when “firm leaders must deal daily with perceived generational stereotypes,” as two experts from the Advanced Management Institute for Architecture and Engineering (AMI) explain. Not understanding – and managing – generational differences among staff can prove costly on many levels, but there are steps that can help smooth the rough edges between inter-generational staffers.

The youngest generation has some very different expectations, according to the AMI survey, not the least of which is having a reasonable path to licensure. We look at some of the efforts under way to make that path smoother, straighter, and shorter. Then, each of the New Practices New York 2008 winners explains the process in developing what it hopes will turn out to be a unique – and successful – practice.

In regular departments, “One Block Over” wonders if it’s the end of the junkyard era for Willets Point, Queens. In “So Says,” Ros Brandt discusses leadership and the need for architects to take a more active role in mentoring and politics. “50-Year Watch” looks back at a bygone cluster of architects in the East 40s. For “Good Practices,” three principals discuss what made their foray into mergers work – or not. Fittingly for an issue about practice, “In Print+” reviews three new business books, a “tome that could set the tone” for preserving Modernist architecture for decades to come, and the “golden freebie” that is the Architectural League’s web-based Digital Archive Project.

Technology has drastically changed how, when, and even where we do business. But at what cost? Who isn’t a multi-tasking speed demon these days? We’ve all hit the “send” button before we should. (I can’t count the number of e-mails I respond to that were obviously sent to the wrong “Kristen” in someone’s address book.) Perhaps we should heed the advice historian and author Alastair Gordon proffered when I complained that I hadn’t had time to read his book, *Spaced Out: Crash Pads, Hippie Communes, Infinity Machines, and Other Radical Environments of the Psychedelic Sixties*: “You need to build yourself a womb room up in a tree and go read the book without any digital equipment to distract you.” I’m for that!

Kristen Richards  
[kristen@ArchNewsNow.com](mailto:kristen@ArchNewsNow.com)



Editor still waiting for the paperless office

K&G PANIC GRAPHICS

Correction: In our Spring 2008 issue, the article “Full House” (page 23) indicated that New York has been the nation’s most populated city since the first federal census in 1790. Architect Lawrence Stelter, R.A., has since noted that census figures show New York became the largest city in 1820.



# NEW PRACTICES NEW YORK/ 2008

## New Practices New York 2008

is the second juried portfolio competition and exhibition in a new biennial tradition sponsored by the New Practices Committee of the AIA New York Chapter. It serves as a platform to recognize and promote new, innovative and emerging architecture firms within New York City that have undertaken unique and commendable strategies – both in the projects they undertake and the practices they have established.

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# Center Highlights

Center for Architecture

## 141st AIA New York Chapter Annual Meeting



SAM LAHOZ

The 2008 Founders Award was presented to Rolf Ohlhausen, FAIA, and Margaret Helfand, FAIA (posthumously): l-r: Tony Schirripa, AIA, 2010 President; Sherida Paulsen, FAIA, President-Elect; Jon Turner (on behalf of Helfand); Ohlhausen; and President James McCullar, FAIA.



SAM LAHOZ

J. Max Bond, Jr., FAIA, received the Medal of Honor for distinguished work and high professional standing.



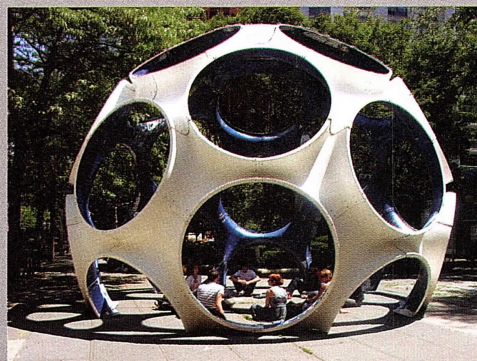
SAM LAHOZ

AIANY Executive Director Rick Bell, FAIA (left), and AIANY Chapter President James McCullar, FAIA, presented former NYC Department of Buildings Commissioner Patricia Lancaster, FAIA, with a Special Proclamation for her years of service to the architectural community and NYC citizens.

For three months last summer, the Center's library was transformed into the Dymaxion Study Center, designed by Project Projects, presenting more than 400 books by and about visionary inventor and theorist Buckminster Fuller.



KRISTEN RICHARDS



BARBIE STEFFEN

Fuller's 1977 "Fly's Eye Dome" landed for a few weeks in LaGuardia Park across the street from the Center, courtesy of the Buckminster Fuller Institute and Max Protetch Gallery, in conjunction with NYC Department of Transportation's Temporary Art Program and Friends of LaGuardia Place.





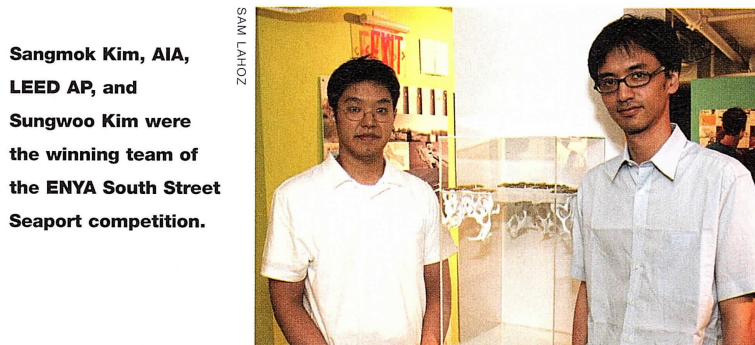
Oculus 5th Anniversary fete (l-r): Jessica Sheridan, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP, Editor-in-Chief of e-Oculus; Kristen Richards, Editor-in-Chief of Oculus; Stephen Kliment, FAIA, Editorial Director of both publications; and Director of Publications and Oculus Committee Chair Kirsten Sibilia, Assoc. AIA.



"South Street Seaport | Re-envisioning the Urban Edge," designed by Steven Mosier, exhibited winning entries in the Emerging New York Architects Committee's Third Biennial Ideas Competition.



"Ecotones: Mitigating NYC's Contentious Sites," designed by Moorhead & Moorhead, was organized by AIANY and the Center for Architecture Foundation in collaboration with the American Society of Landscape Architects New York Chapter.

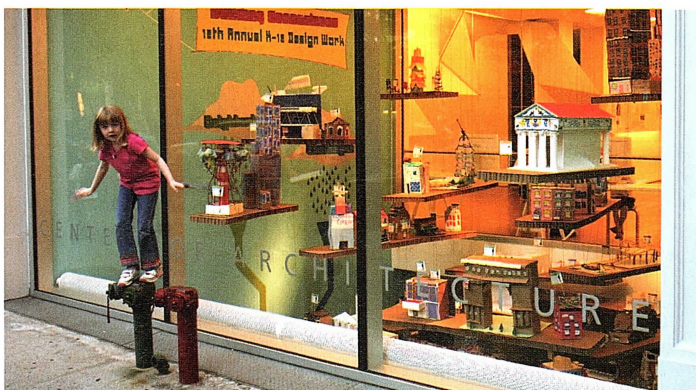


Sangmok Kim, AIA, LEED AP, and Sungwoo Kim were the winning team of the ENYA South Street Seaport competition.



"Ecotones" curator Tricia Martin with NYC Chief of Design of Capital Projects Charles McKinney, Affil. ASLA.

## Center for Architecture Foundation



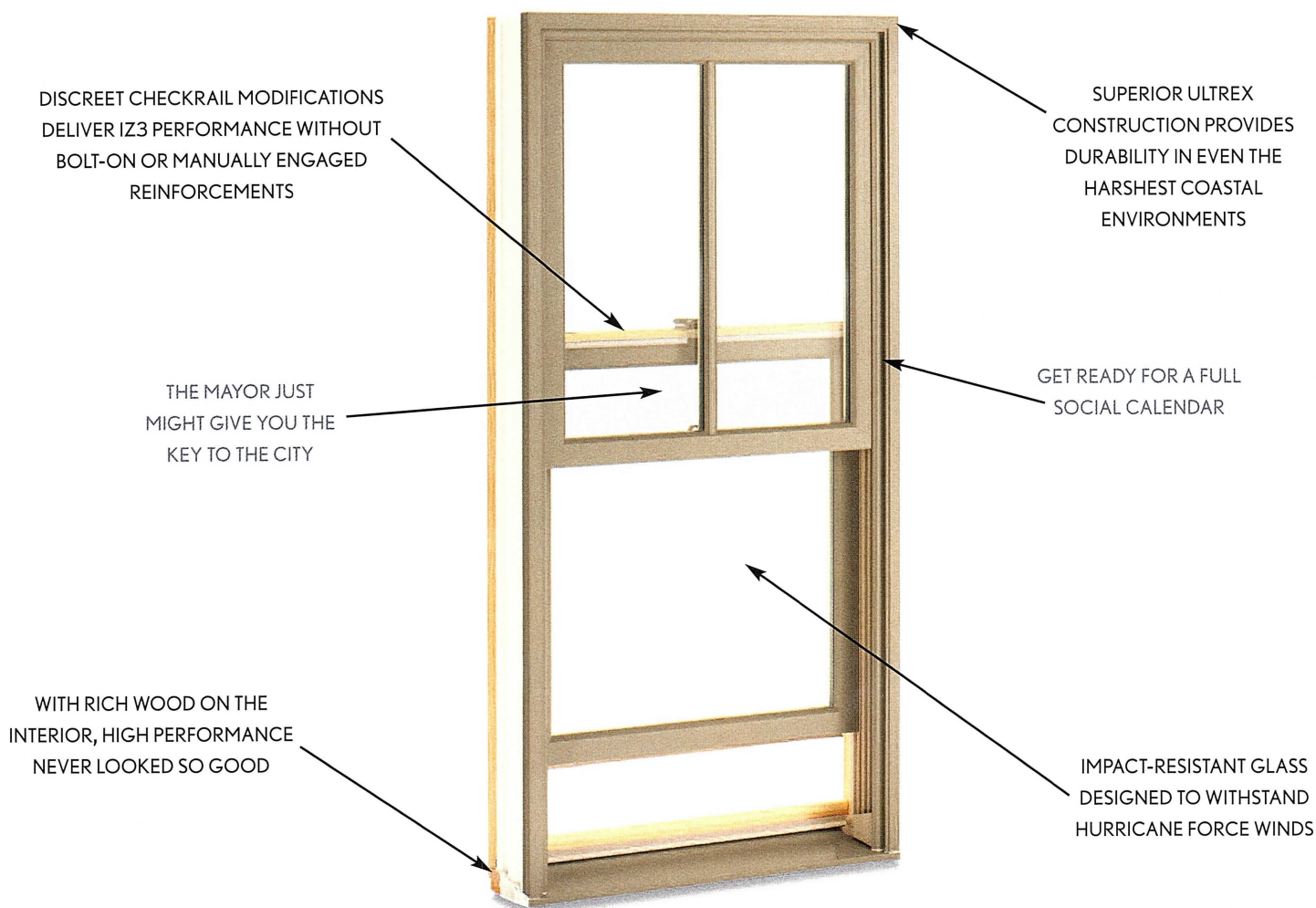
"Building Connections: 12th Annual Exhibition of K-12 Design Work," designed by Arquitectonica, showcased models and drawings by students in the Center for Architecture Foundation programs.



Care Bears on Fire - all high schoolers - had the crowd rockin' at the Center for the "Building Connections" opening.



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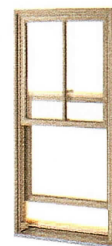


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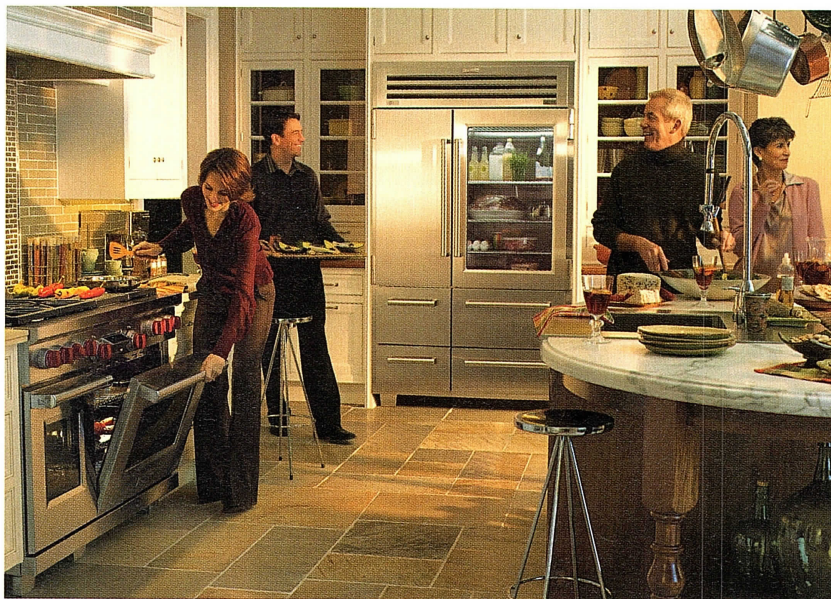
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# Willets Point:

## End of an Era for a Queens Junkyard?

One Block Over

By Alex Mindlin

In the spring of 1972, a Department of Sanitation crew made an unexpected discovery in the Willets Point neighborhood of Queens. Beneath some 1,000 tons of debris, including 13 truck bodies and an airplane tire, the crew “reported uncovering several streets...that had been all but lost,” according to the *New York Times*.

The find could only have happened in Willets Point, a low-rise shantytown of body shops and tire-repair joints in a 61-acre wedge northeast of Shea Stadium. The neighborhood has been evolving to its present state since the 1940s, when the first auto-parts businesses arrived. By 1964, officials of the World’s Fair were urging the city to condemn it, calling it “a gigantic junkyard, an eyesore, and a disgrace to New York.”

These days, the junkyard is still there, more exuberantly trashy than ever. Willets Point is surely the only dense commercial neighborhood in New York without pavement, sanitary sewers, or, on some blocks, streetlights. Its streets are pebbly tracks where cars pitch in and out of truck-sized potholes; after even a moderate rain, these become foot-deep lakes. Men lounge on ripped-out car seats in mid-sidewalk, sombreros covering their eyes. Dozens of radios compete for attention.

But this may not be around much longer. The city has spent the last five decades trying to replace Willets Point with something better-mannered, and that effort finally seems to be bearing fruit. The latest plan involves moving out the Willets Point businesses, by eminent domain if necessary, and replacing them with 5,500 units of housing, a hotel and convention center, and 2.2 million square feet of office space, restaurants, and retail shops.

When and if that happens, New York will lose a case study in temporary architecture, of how people behave when they expect to be told to move out at any moment. Machinery worth thousands of dollars squats at the back of tin shacks. Elaborate networks of gangways and catwalks link junkyards to the rooftops of shipping containers, and rooftops to each other. The neighborhood’s two indigenous forms of architecture – the shipping container and the Quonset hut – make for characteristic layouts. Where two Quonset huts meet, a tiny alley forms in between; where a hut meets a container, they make a little wedge-shaped interstice in midair, which is usually stuffed with car parts.

There is only one residential building in Willets Point, a stumpy orange two-story Mock Tudor wedged between an ironworks and an



Typical Willets Point street



Fenders on a rooftop

auto-parts store. Joseph Ardizzone, a thin, voluble 75-year-old, lives there alone; his father built the place around 1932, when the neighborhood was mostly wetlands. “There were pheasants, rabbits, frogs,” Ardizzone recalled recently. “Right next door we had goats.”

Ardizzone, who has the run of the neighborhood’s businesses, brought me to the roof of a three-story warehouse at the eastern end of Willets Point. Below, the neighborhood stretched out in all its improvised glory. The roofs of buildings were spiny with bumpers and fenders, all tagged and neatly ranged. An entire car body sat on one roof; scores of hubcaps gleamed on another.

“Look how far down it goes,” said Ardizzone, sweeping an arm. He paused. “I’m staying here,” he added. “I’ve got no place to go.”

Alex Mindlin is a writer who lives in Brooklyn. He also contributes regularly to the *New York Times*.

ALEX MINDLIN

ALEX MINDLIN



# So Says... Roslyn

KRISTEN RICHARDS



Roslyn Brandt, Assoc. AIA, is president of Brandt Resources, a marketing, management, and presentation skills training firm organized to support the “movers and shakers” in the design, real estate, and construction communities. Prior to starting her firm, Brandt was senior principal and managing director of the HOK Interiors Group in New York and San Francisco. Her work has been published extensively in prominent trade publications, and she frequently lectures on issues facing the design community. *Oculus* caught up with her in the middle of a busy day to discuss leadership, how to handle bad news, and the need for architects to take a more active role in politics and the broader business world.

**Kristen Richards:** What are some of the decision-making structures in design, management, IT, marketing and business development, recruitment, and so forth?

**Ros Brandt:** Design, project management, and production are project-focused functions, so the success of the individual project is most important to these folks. IT, marketing/business development, HR, and firm leadership are firm-focused; they're responsible for keeping the doors open over the long run. The natural tension between the two areas is very healthy and there must be a balance. Too many firms are strong in one area but ignore the other.

In the past few years, HR and recruitment departments have become much more sophisticated and in demand. Many Gen-Xers left the profession in the late 1980s/early '90s, when the economy was in a downturn and jobs were scarce. As a result, fewer of that generation are available to move into leadership positions being vacated by retiring Boomers. Firms are finding it a challenge to fill those positions and are faced with training younger professionals to move up faster.

Professionals have developed effective ways to attract potential candidates. For example, they are more involved in working with schools to meet students who will soon enter the workforce. There is a real commitment to exposing interns to design, project management, production, and multiple project types, then allowing them to find the area in which they can excel. In most major firms, mentoring and the IDP process are the basis for making the path to licensure an integral part of the firm's culture.

**KR** How do you see firms dealing with generational issues?

**RB** We're probably seeing more complexities today because young people are more technologically savvy than their bosses. These Gen-Yers (“the Millennials”) have very different expectations than their older counterparts. They expect to be seen, heard, and accommodated, yet most haven't learned much about struggle or sacrifice. They strive for work-life balance and, while they will work a 60-hour week if they have to, they don't want that to be a way of life. And they expect to be well paid for their efforts.

The frustrations of dealing with these new expectations can be a real challenge for principals. Firm leaders are searching for creative ways to motivate and communicate effectively with younger employees while integrating their skills into the operation.

**KR** What should be some of the basic policies regarding leadership change, ownership transitions, and mergers?

**RB** Too many mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures are based on perceived synergies related to market sectors, geographic diversity, financial strengths, technology consolidation, etc. That's not what it's all about. The key elements for a successful merger are compatibility in terms of both interpersonal chemistry and organizational structure, and communication between principals and staff.

Among the options to consider when planning an ownership transition are an internal transfer, bringing in a leader, seeking a merger or acquisition, or creating an Employee Stock Ownership Plan. All are technically important and take time to accomplish. But ownership transition requires respect, understanding, and shared goals between new partners. Without these, you're wasting your time.

**KR** I hear a lot of frustration from firms who say they have a project abroad, nothing is going right, and they're not going to make any money. Should they just go for it and consider it the cost of doing business?



# Brandt, Assoc. AIA

**RB** Many firms approach international work with stars in their eyes, salivating over the opportunity to design the next 100-story mega-tower. Some have been very successful, but some have been badly burned. Firms need to do their homework before they start doing work abroad. Understanding and appreciating cultural differences is key. They could develop relationships with firms in cities where they want to work and consider forming alliances, perhaps taking less of a share of the overall revenue on the first project, and using it as a learning experience. Consider it a long-term investment of both time and money.

Once they've gained expertise, they can venture into a full scope of services with confidence that they can do great work effectively and profitably. The firms that have done it have been rewarded because American talent is very much in demand.

**KR** How would you advise a firm to respond to negative events like losing a competition or someone leaving the firm?

**RB** Nobody likes a sore loser. Be gracious; people will remember that. If you compete for a project and are not successful, wish the client well; stay in touch so they know you really want to work with them some day. There's always another project on another day.

When somebody leaves the firm, again wish them well. Anger and vindictiveness get you nowhere. Remember that today's employee can be tomorrow's client.

**KR** What about a firm being dismissed from a job?

**RB** Use that negative experience to do some soul searching about what the problem was. Deal with it and correct it so it doesn't happen again. Too many firms are dismissed because they don't communicate well, produce documentation on time, or keep promises. Then they go on to the next project and the same thing happens. You can't build a successful firm that way.

Take your licks and learn from them. Once you have corrected the problem, go back to the client and let them know what you've done. Thank them for being the catalyst that helped you improve your service, and tell them you'd welcome an opportunity to serve them well in the future. It's a hard thing to do, but it's the right thing to do. And it works!

**KR** What are some dos and don'ts when presenting at a shortlist interview?

**RB** Do your homework! Make sure you understand the client and the specifics of the project well. Tailor your presentation to address specific needs, concerns, and goals, and show how you and your team are going to solve them. Formulate your strategy and begin with a plan to outline each team member's role and message, time allotment, and visual tools.

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Logistics should be flawlessly handled, the interaction between team members well-coordinated, and information organized. Go in acting like you've already got the job and show that client what it will be like to work with you. The more positive you are, the better chance you have of convincing the client that yours is a compatible, communicative, consultative, capable, and highly experienced team that can solve their problems.

**KR** With the economy the way it is, what do you see coming down the road?

**RB** It appears the economy here on the East Coast is going to remain pretty strong for at least the next year, although that's not the case in other areas of the country.

No matter which party wins in November, there will be a change of administration in January, and that's got to be energizing. Architects need to take this time to get organized. They should take a close look at their business structure, strengths and weaknesses; create a business development/marketing plan; look at staff size and quality; accelerate staff training programs; and make sure technology is up to par so they will be competitive when the opportunities arise.

**KR** People seem more prepared to look to the future now than in the late 1980s/early '90s, when the down market apparently caught a lot of firms off-guard and blindsided. Do you think the industry is much more aware now?

**RB** People are much more knowledgeable today. The AIA, for one, has done a great job of keeping people informed about all aspects of our profession, and smart professionals are taking full advantage of their efforts. You'd have to be living under a rock to not know what's going on.

I wish architects took a more active role in politics, civic organizations, and the broader business world. I'd like to think that architects are going to become more appreciated, understood, and respected by the general population for the role we play and expertise we provide. Unless we get out there and participate more, that can't happen.

**KR** Might you go into politics?

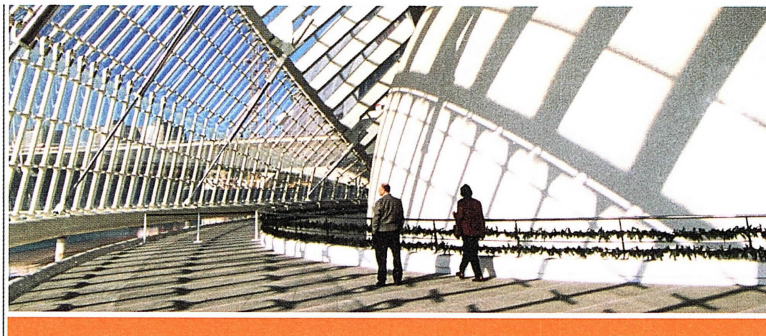
**RB** No!



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# The Office

Life Behind the  
Scenes  
By Stephen A.  
Kliment, FAIA

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The architect's office has two faces. The one you see is the physical layout and the finished projects. The one behind the scenes – the leadership, organizational structure, culture, generational makeup, and location – is what makes each firm what it is.

**Location.** A crucial behind-the-scenes decision is where to locate the office and what the location says about a firm. Look at the map on page 23 and notice what at first looks like a crowd mentality in the heavy clusters south of Houston Street, between Union Square and 42nd Street, and around Penn Station. As Roger Yee notes in his "Tale of Two Manhattans," however, there is a commonality that has more to do with physical amenity and rent than actual location. The common factors include high, undivided, well-lit space and panoramic views, often found in industrial buildings on the fringes of thriving neighborhoods. One of the largest clusters is at 180 Varick Street, where architect Frederic Schwartz, FAIA, was first to arrive. Printing presses were still running, Schwartz told Yee, and the pounding caused the whole building to vibrate. But he liked the views, and he placed his open office where he could teach, nurture, and manage. Charles Baskett, AIA, of Butler Rogers Baskett, at another mega-cluster at 475 Tenth Avenue, enjoys an "agora" for employees to meet, eat, and converse. An exciting new concentration is attracting pioneers to DUMBO, a spot in Brooklyn with cheap rents and great views.

**Culture.** This is a much bandied-about but elusive term without which a firm is simply not a firm. I know of an architect who has lived through cultures of two national, renowned firms. The culture of one was formal and hierarchical, with specialized responsibilities and crossover discouraged. In the other, informality was elevated to a high art, teamwork and collaboration reigned, and the client was encouraged to pitch in with programming and design.

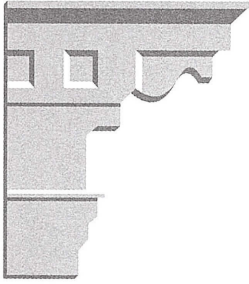
Did this show up in the product? Certainly. But a firm's culture takes in its entire history. As Jean Valance pointed out to Andrew Pressman, FAIA, in the February 2008 issue of *Architectural Record*, this history inevitably reflects "its leaders' ambitions and goals, its definition of and criteria for excellence, its attitude about clients and staff, its traditions and lore, its mood and energy, its balance between art and business."

**New Practices New York.** A sharp insight into what makes firms tick emerged last June, when the jurors of the New Practices New York 2008 competition announced the six winners out of 52 contestants. Enterprising initiatives by the winners tell a lot about the nature of the firms. Matter Practice, whose work ranges from architecture to exhibit design, resolves to take on one design-build project per year. Participating in construction gives the firm "more time to develop our ideas while diminishing the task of dictating it to others through documents or submitted CAD files," partner Sandra Wheeler tells *Oculus'* Linda Miller. Meanwhile, Philippe Baumann of Baumann Architecture shares a contrarian manifesto as he comes out vigorously against "current architectural trends, rarefied academic discourse, the mundane and the overused, and the green bandwagon." Architects, he argues, overlook that their hours are long, designs are compromised, client interaction can be exhausting, and production can go on forever. Simply by understanding this, Baumann can exult in the process and reach for the best results.

**Generation gap.** Firms that acknowledge that Traditionalists, Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials differ in work habits, attitudes, and expectations will win the behind-the-scenes challenge by focusing on jobs that meet each cohort's needs. They must also recognize that the era of lifetime job security and loyalty has vanished, as younger generations have come to value employability above employment.

Of course, this is just a glimpse at the dynamic inner workings of an architect's office. For more, including a revealing study on how to pull off a successful merger, we invite our readers to take a closer look behind the scenes.





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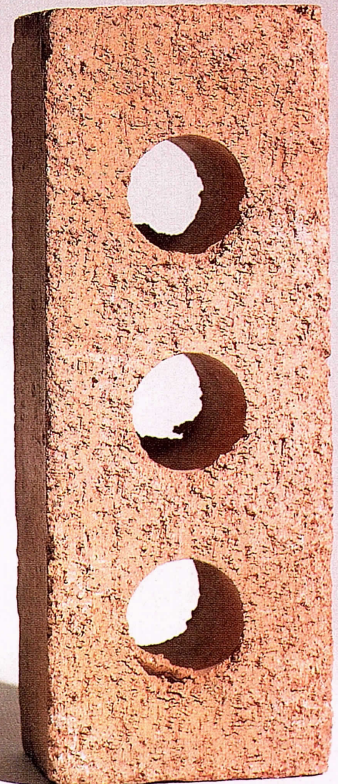
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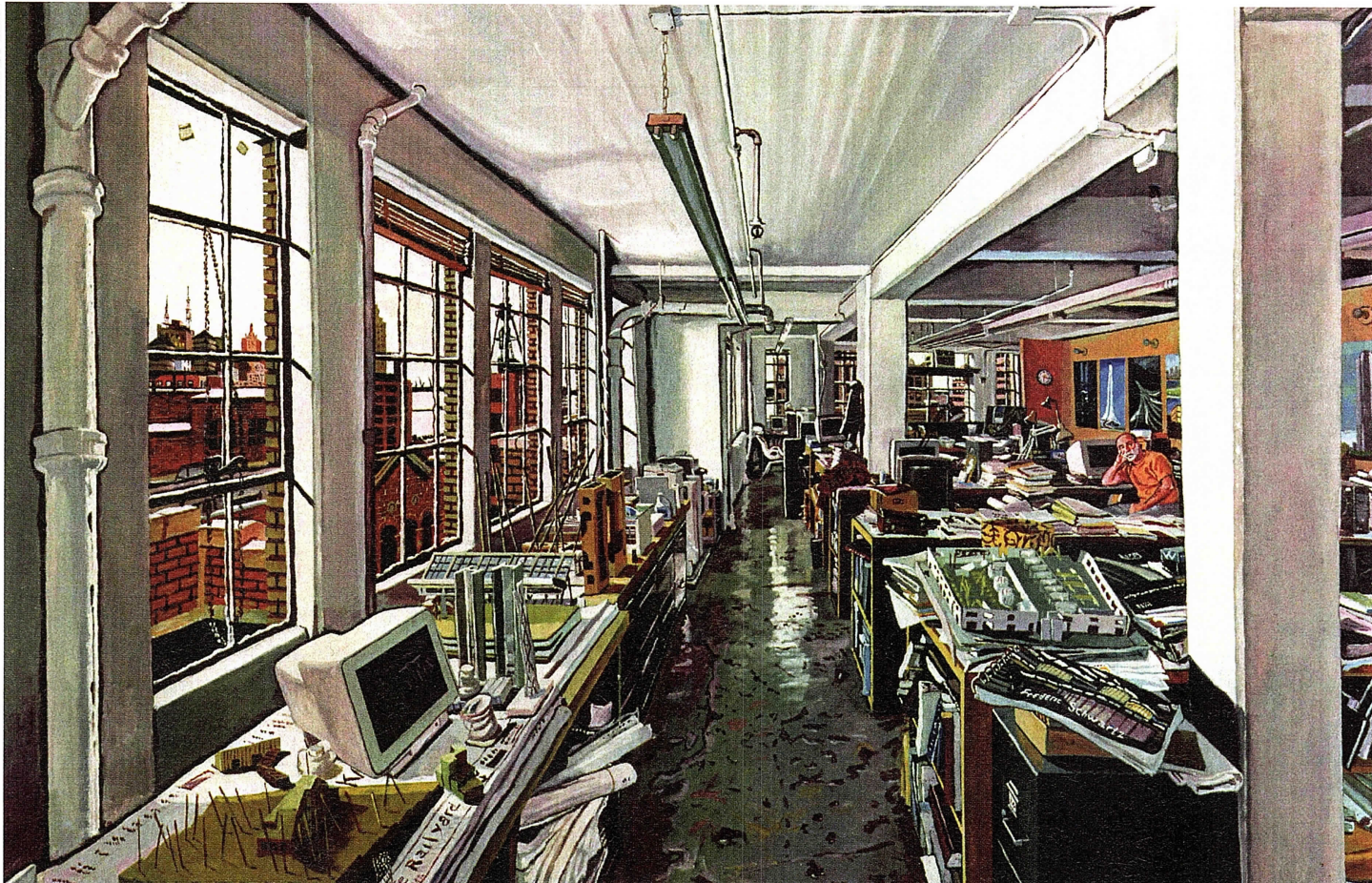
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This map illustrates the distribution of parks and green spaces across Manhattan, New York City. The parks are marked with green dots and labels, showing a high concentration in the central and northern parts of the island. Key parks include Central Park, Union Square, Times Square, and the Port Authority. The map also shows the locations of major landmarks such as Penn Station, the Center for Architecture, and the Hudson River. The map is color-coded with green for parks and yellow for urban areas. Major streets and landmarks are labeled, including Central Park, Union Square, and Times Square. The Hudson River is to the west, and the East River is to the east. The map also shows the locations of the Port Authority, Penn Station, and the Center for Architecture. A scale bar and a north arrow are included in the bottom left corner.





# A Tale of Two Manhattans

Why so many New York architects were spurred to set up shop in a select few buildings in Midtown and SoHo

By Roger Yee



Top: 180 Varick Street: Schwartz Architects Above: 180 Varick Street: André Kikoski Architect



You can still see ghosts from New York's days as a 19th- and 20th-century industrial powerhouse, particularly along the waterfront, highways, and rail yards where they stand – vast, time-worn, and often silent. But consider two survivors of Manhattan's manufacturing age, 180 Varick Street in SoHo, and 475 Tenth Avenue in Midtown South, humble workhorse buildings that are sheltering a sizable number of architects as tenants.

Why have architects gathered here? Do the buildings reflect their organizational culture? What kinds of social environments thrive in them? *Oculus* posed these and similar questions to firms at these addresses plus 315 Hudson Street in SoHo. What emerged from discussions with their principals is a common way of using space in old industrial buildings on the fringes of thriving neighborhoods.

An intriguing fact about practice in New York is the relatively low priority of neighborhood. If a building meets their needs, architects say, they'll learn to like or at least tolerate the surroundings. They identify the "good bones" of a structure and then aggressively move walls, columns, or even floors to make it work. As Steven Davis, FAIA, a principal of Davis Brody Bond Aedas, cheerfully recalls the transformation of 315 Hudson Street, "The first thing we did was to paint everything white. Then we decided how to develop the space."

#### 180 Varick: From printers to designers

Once a center of the printing industry, 180 Varick is a massive, brick-clad monolith that is now home to many small businesses. The 20 or so architecture firms leasing here share a number of characteristics. They're relatively small, young, and adventurous, leasing one of their earliest – if not their first – formal offices.

"I believe I was the first architect to arrive," says Frederic Schwartz, FAIA, a principal of Schwartz Architects. "Printing presses were still functioning in 1993, and the pounding caused the whole building to vibrate. What made me take the space was a view that included the World Trade Center, Woolworth Building, New York Harbor, the Chrysler Building, and the Empire State Building."

Schwartz declares that 180 Varick has been good to him. First, because he lives in SoHo he can walk to work in a neighborhood he "absolutely loves." Second, Schwartz, five associates, and an inter-



TRUDY GIORGANO/MICHAEL SORKIN STUDIO

**Above: 180 Varick Street: Michael Sorkin Studio Below: 180 Varick Street: Thomas Phifer and Partners**

national staff of 22 keep capturing desirable commissions, most recently landing three airports in India and a Nike store in SoHo. Finally, his office places him in the middle of an open studio setting, where he can teach and nurture as well as manage – tasks he relishes. Still drawing with a pen, Schwartz sums up a good day as one that ends with "a lot of ink on my hands."

Thomas Phifer, AIA, a principal of Thomas Phifer and Partners, took a big step in moving to 180 Varick in 1997, a year after founding his firm in his Upper West Side living room. "I picked this building first because of its spatial qualities: big concrete frame, tall ceilings, wide steel windows and openness," he remembers. "Second, the landlord was willing to lease less than full floors. Many young practices like mine don't need much space."

He has crafted a unique workplace in 180 Varick. The largely open setting is dominated by a 82-foot-long table where Phifer sits with two partners and directs the office in a collaborative, conversational style. The partners are joined at the table by six associates and most of the staff of 25 in fulfilling commissions ranging from courthouses and private houses to furniture and lighting fixtures for New York City. Phifer is enthusiastic about his office. "I'm blessed with great clients and great staff," he proclaims. "So I prefer to think more about the quality of our work than the size of our office."



LEN LOPATE/THOMAS PHIFER AND PARTNERS



Size is definitely not a fixation for André Kikoski, AIA, who founded André Kikoski Architect in 2002. Kikoski happily traded a space in his wife's graphic design studio for a sublet in 180 Varick. "I was looking for good light, ceiling height, and a view," he points out, "and here was a chance to create an open space where small teams of people could do big things." But in assembling a staff of 12, including a senior associate, he remains determined to be small and selective.

The office reflects Kikoski's desire for a collegial atmosphere. It's open and intensely used, with a big pinup area at the center. "Here we can focus on our tasks and then relax, have lunch, and stretch out," he indicates. Thanks to well-trained and productive employees, the firm tackles everything from the conversion of a Brooklyn warehouse into restaurants, shops, and other commercial facilities, to interior design, furniture, fabrics, and lighting fixtures. "I'd like to stay small so I can participate fully in every project and read all my e-mail," Kikoski notes.

Small is also beautiful for Michael Sorkin, AIA, principal of Michael Sorkin Studio. With a staff of six and a schedule that takes him around the world – he is currently advising several Chinese cities on master planning – he appreciates 180 Varick's loft-like space and affordability. Yet Sorkin is acutely aware of how architects, designers, and artists are one step ahead of bankers, lawyers, and brokers. "I feel like I'm part of a pincer movement," he describes. "I've gone from the top to the eighth floor to the street. Now the corporate suits are coming. Who knows how long architects can hold on?"

### 315 Hudson: Great space, not-so-great neighborhood

Not every architecture firm practicing downtown is young, small, or just establishing a reputation. Not far from 180 Varick, Davis Brody Bond Aedas, founded in 1952 by Lewis Davis, FAIA, and Samuel Brody, FAIA, is marking its 19th year in 315 Hudson Street, where Bankers Trust once incinerated bearer bonds. A quest for good, affordable space led the firm from 42nd Street to what was undeniably a transitional neighborhood in 1989. "We sent our late-nighters home in radio-dispatched cars," recalls Steven Davis, the co-founder's son. "It was years before we felt comfortable here."

However, 315 Hudson displayed the classic spaces that architects prize. Once the studio emerged with plentiful daylight, largely undivided space, and panoramic Hudson River views, Davis Brody Bond settled in quickly. Along the way, it converted completely to

CAD, fielded a workforce of 125 to 150 employees, joined a Belgium-based design consortium called Aedas, and resumed a tradition of project oriented, highly collaborative, multidisciplinary teams.

"The space supports our participatory environment," Davis says. "It lets us do such things as office-wide project pinups, where staff members present while partners sit quietly in the audience. This is one of many ways we sustain a good social environment. Everyone understands that our clients, like the World Trade Center Memorial, Columbia University, and Tishman Speyer, are more important than our buildings."



315 Hudson Street: Davis Brody Bond Aedas

### 475 Tenth Avenue: Terracotta beacon over an asphalt sea

Before the emergence of global media giant McGraw-Hill, publisher of *Architectural Record*, its predecessor, Hill Publishing Company, resided in 475 Tenth. Judging from the scrupulously maintained building that currently shelters six architecture firms among a variety of tenants, it was a good match. The handsomely detailed, terracotta-clad tower anchored a transitional neighborhood of trucking companies, auto dealers, auto body shops, and what Robert Siegel, FAIA, a principal of Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects, wryly describes as "hanky panky."



When the firm Siegel co-founded with Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, relocated from Carnegie Hall to 475 Tenth in 1982, the Javits Center was being finished and most tenants were apparel businesses. Nevertheless, the floors were large, columns were regularly spaced, ceilings were high, views were impressive, and rent was affordable. Other pluses included the loading dock and service elevator (good for prototypes and samples), nearby public transportation, and open cityscape. Minuses included the primitive heating system and leaky windows – and the neighborhood's sex trade.

Today, Siegel agrees 475 Tenth was a smart choice. The building's HVAC system is up-to-date, the new windows are top quality, and the streets are safe. Best of all, the firm's 65 employees work in harmony with the handsome, loft-like design that Gwathmey and Siegel, partners for 40 years, created for the studios they direct with their associates. (The landlord immediately made it the centerpiece of building tours for prospective tenants.) Being a pioneer had drawbacks, however. "We moved in, invited architects and engineers to look around, and nobody came," Siegel recalls. "It wasn't until Massimo and Leila Vignelli renovated the top floor that we felt others might follow."

**"It's an exciting time to be here, there's lots of development. We'll watch the railroad yards evolve. Meanwhile, you can see the Empire State Building and New Yorker Hotel from our windows. There's a vibe in the air."** Juergen Riehm, FAIA

Among those subsequently attracted to 475 Tenth was Richard Meier & Partners. "I was at 57th Street and Lexington Avenue, and needed more space," remembers Richard Meier, FAIA, founder, principal, and Pritzker Laureate. "Every architect wants the most space for a reasonable rent, and 475 Tenth had what I wanted." The arrival of his prestigious practice in 1986 gave the building the cachet it now enjoys.

His firm's studio system has thrived in the atelier environment he designed for a current staff of about 75. "The quality of light has always been wonderful," Meier reports, "and there are few impediments to anything we wish to do. People function well here and we have a good social life." Yet Meier feels no attachment to the environs.

"You see mostly parking lots and there are no good restaurants," he explains. "Development is picking up, but it's not clear the neighborhood is changing for the better." Despite renting storage space in Long Island City, the firm remains satisfied with 475 Tenth.

Arriving in 1999, Butler Rogers Baskett Architects was initially concerned about the neighborhood. "The building was not at the top of my list," concedes Charles Baskett, AIA, co-founder and principal. "But the space was great, the rent was right, and we'd have nice neighbors." Still, Baskett and other principals worried that employees, now totaling 82 in New York and South Norwalk, Connecticut, would miss Park Avenue South's amenities. Consequently, they established an "agora" where employees can meet, have meals, and hold informal meetings.

Not only has the nearly 30-year-old firm prospered in 475 Tenth, developing award-winning designs for education, sports, clubs, historic preservation, and corporate and professional offices, it may have to absorb the agora's space. "Our architecture and corporate interiors studios need more room," Baskett admits. "But we'll retain the agora if we can. We have a happy group of people, and they use it regularly."

### Is geography destiny?

Does it follow that the more upscale the address, the larger and more established the architects occupying it? That's not exactly how Juergen Riehm, FAIA, co-founder and a principal of 1100: Architect, describes his firm's arrival at 475 Tenth.



MATILDA FORSBERG/1100: ARCHITECT

475 Tenth Ave.: 1100: Architect



"The building was not at the top of my list, but the space was great, the rent was right, and we'd have nice neighbors."

Charles Baskett, AIA

Founded in 1983 by Riehm and David Piscuskas, FAIA, 1100: Architect moved uptown from SoHo in 2005 to escape the growing presence of fashionistas. "Our broker showed us the open space and great views at 475 Tenth," Riehm recounts. "We said, 'Wow, we'll take it,' and then realized who the other tenants were."

His firm of 45 employees revels in the expanded facility. With room for studios, meetings, a materials library, and a model shop in the largely open space, it promotes more interaction among principals, staff, and clients. "It's an exciting time to be here," Riehm says. "There's lots of development. We'll watch the railroad yards evolve. Meanwhile, you can see the Empire State Building and New Yorker Hotel from our windows. There's a vibe in the air."

If Riehm does not equate his firm with its older and more established neighbors, 1100: Architect is nevertheless becoming respected for making residential, commercial, and institutional projects that are garnering awards and other recognition. Like other young firms with roots and/or other associations overseas, it even maintains a small Frankfurt office that began with an American client and now wins local commissions, such as the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt.

Growth is not a high priority for the principals, however. "We wouldn't mind growing," Riehm concedes. "But we want to maintain our culture and connect directly to whatever we're doing."

A building does indeed make the architect within. But only up to a point. Open spaces, high ceilings, and affordable rent constitute a fail-safe recipe for architects. If the experiences of practitioners quoted here

are any indication, their visions remain uniquely their own, and their work doesn't bear anything like a collective label reading, "Made in 180 Varick."

Roger Yee is senior editor of architecture and design for Visual Reference Publications and a consultant to organizations in the design community.



475 Tenth Ave.: Butler Rogers Baskett Architects



475 Tenth Ave.: Gwathmey Siegel & Associates



475 Tenth Ave.: Richard Meier & Partners



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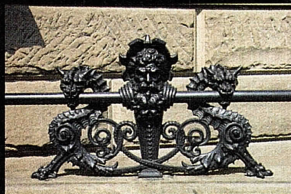
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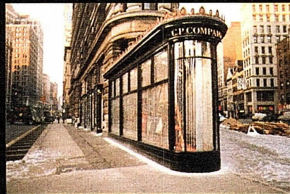
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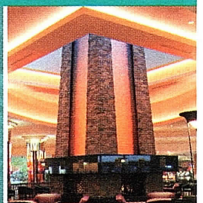
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# There Goes the Neighborhood

Call it DUMBO, but it's a brilliant location for architecture firms  
By Richard Staub

SAA/STAN ALLEN ARCHITECT



**Above: Stan Allen Architect: Taichung Gateway Park City, Taiwan Below: Konyk Architecture: Whorl Building, Preston, UK, competition entry**

“It was a no-brainer,” says Jane Stageberg, AIA, when asked why she and her partners at Bade Stageberg Cox (BSC) decided to move to Brooklyn’s DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) area. That also sums up the response from principals at such firms as nARCHITECTS, Garrison Architects, and Stan Allen Architect, who have been attracted by the area’s cheaper rents, large industrial spaces, and arts-driven environment. Then, of course, there are the inspiring views across the East River of Manhattan and the New York waterfront, framed by the looming towers of the Brooklyn Bridge.

For BSC, a 40% rent increase for an inadequate Manhattan space got them thinking about Brooklyn. That and glowing reviews from nARCHITECTS, a growing young firm that wanted room to build the models that are part of their design process. In Manhattan, nARCHITECTS had shared space with other firms, and their portion amounted to about 350 square feet. In DUMBO, they found 2,700 square feet and rent the space they aren’t using.

Conventional wisdom used to be that a Manhattan address was a must if a New York City architecture firm wanted to be taken seri-

ously. But several Brooklyn firms say the change in location has had no effect on business. Many cite Craig Konyk, AIA, founder of Konyk Architecture, as the true pioneer. Konyk, who has had his own firm since 1989, moved to DUMBO in 1994, he says, “because I trusted the strength of the neighborhood. Some firms get caught in what they think they should be doing, instead of what’s right for them. I never thought that way, and it has helped me get noticed.” Adds Stageberg, “Our clients just think it’s a cool neighborhood to come to.”

The neighborhood also has a creative buzz. “Architects follow

KONYK ARCHITECTURE





artists to new locations,” says Mimi Hoang of nARCHITECTS, the winner of P.S.1/MoMA’s Young Architects Program in 2007. “The tenants in our building include artists, graphic designers, fabricators, and related trades, so there’s a sense that something’s happening. We also run into other architects at the local deli and on the street, so there’s an ongoing awareness of an architectural community.” And as in Manhattan, firms tend to cluster in a few buildings – the greatest concentrations are five in 45 Main Street and seven in 55 Washington – according to AIA NY records.

James Garrison, AIA, founder of Garrison Architects, a visiting assistant professor at Pratt Institute, and a Brooklyn resident, said the move from 180 Varick Street in Manhattan six years ago has had only benefits. And indeed it makes sense given Garrison’s Brooklyn projects, including Restoration Plaza in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the Rivendale School expansion in Park Slope, which were already underway. “Living, working, and teaching in the same environment have terrific benefits for an architect, especially because of the insight and engagement you bring to a project. And it helps us unify our focus. The greater Brooklyn design community has welcomed us – we exhibited our modular house design in last May’s ‘Brooklyn Design’ exhibit – and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce has also expressed interest in us and in DUMBO as a place for design firms.”



FRANK OUDERMAN

For Brooklyn resident Ellen Honigstock, founder of Ellen Honigstock Architects, moving her firm from 611 Broadway in Manhattan to DUMBO six years ago meant she could manage her two-person firm and have a baby and feel that she’s reasonably in control of both. “My clients didn’t know the difference,” says Honigstock.

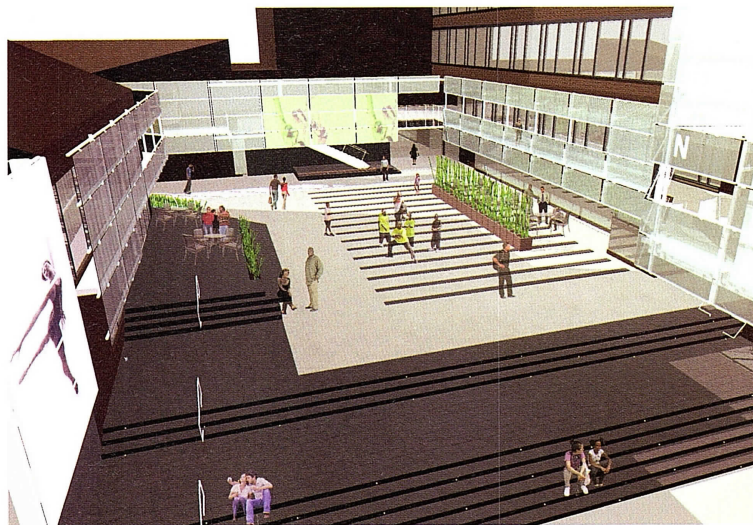
That’s not to say that architects and their firms are new to Brooklyn. Frank

LoPresto, AIA, president of the AIA Brooklyn Chapter (founded in 1894), says the chapter lists approximately 340 members. But this new concentration of architects, many of whom are getting press attention, is raising Brooklyn and DUMBO consciousness.

The relatively new awareness of the area is matched by the youth of the firms, their small size – mostly two to 12 people – and the horizontal structure and collaborative culture many of them promote. The three partners of BSC, whose Art Cave underground art gallery in Napa, California, was featured in a November 2007 *New York Times Magazine* article, work collaboratively on all projects and hire carefully to find employees who want long-term relationships. Staff gatherings can include a 6 p.m. break for beer or a happy hour organized around an office pinup of ongoing projects. “We feel energized by our staff and work hard to have a satisfying environment,” says Stageberg.

At nARCHITECTS, Hoang says there’s an intense, sometimes frenetic, almost always enjoyable environment. While she and her part-

GARRISON ARCHITECTS



**Above: Garrison Architects: Restoration Plaza, Brooklyn, NY Below: Ellen Honigstock Architects: Art Cave, Napa, CA Left: nARCHITECTS: Switch Building, New York, NY**

ner/husband Eric Bunge, AIA, always take the project lead, they give a lot of responsibility to their staff. Keeping the structure lean allows the firm to avoid pure bread-and-butter jobs and take only interesting work.

Given the relative youth of many of these firms, most haven’t thought much about the long term except to express a desire to stay small and grow responsibly. One exception is Konyk, who, with a current staff of six, envisions a firm of 30 to 50 people. Needless to say, succession plans are a long way off. Health benefits are standard,



JASON SCHMIDT

while vacation policies are somewhat informal, ranging from the initial two weeks to a take-it-as-you-need-it approach. And standard hours are often 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with time off given in compensation for those late-night charrettes.

When asked just how established DUMBO had become as a practice center, several architects mention the opening of an office by Stan Allen, AIA, the dean

of Princeton University’s School of Architecture. Formerly director of the Advanced Design Program at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture and head of his own firm from 1990 to 2002, Allen has moved the firm he restarted in 2004 from Princeton to DUMBO so he can be where the talent and action are. As a bringer of design gravitas and the head of an international practice, Allen seems to validate the location. But for other observers, it is the commitment, energy, and innovative work by the architecture firms already there that suggest DUMBO has truly arrived.

Richard Staub is a marketing consultant and writer who focuses on issues important to the design and building community.





# Inner Space

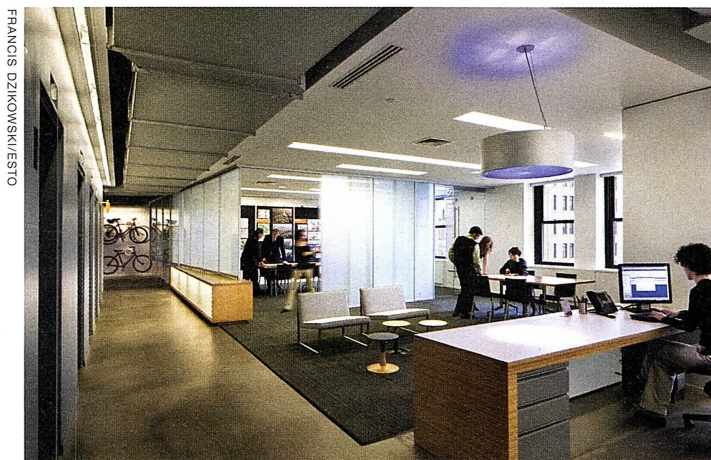
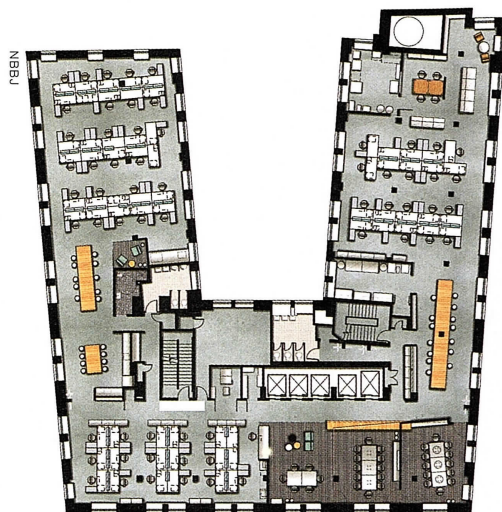
It's ironic that architecture firms often pay far more attention to their clients' spaces than their own. It's like a gourmet chef who, coming home tired at the end of the day, just pops a TV dinner in the oven.

But as we all know, one's workspace has a huge impact on productivity and morale – not to mention the impression made on visiting clients. And, as a firm evolves, its space needs to keep up. A couple of different-sized New York architecture offices, NBBJ and hanrahanMeyers architects (hMa), recently tackled the task of reinventing their office spaces, reexamining their own corporate goals and identities along the way.

For sustainability-conscious multinational NBBJ, the impending end of a 10-year lease on its overcrowded and outdated Manhattan office near Union Square prompted a quest to find a new location for its staff, then numbering 45. The company was planning an expansion, and its work style was becoming more fluid and technology-driven. Collaboration was the name of the game, and with many projects in China and other overseas locations, videoconferencing and other high-tech tools were rising in importance. The 7,700-square-foot space with only two meeting rooms and no Wi-Fi was holding them back.

Attracted by low rents and the chance to join a neighborhood in transition, the firm decided to move to Lower Manhattan, where it found a nearly 16,000-square-foot space on the 25th floor at 2 Rector Street. The U-shaped site with 60 windows offered bountiful natural light and sweeping views of Manhattan and the Hudson River, whose natural beauty serves as a subtle reminder of the firm's ecological mission, says partner Tim Johnson, AIA, LEED AP. The location near public transportation encourages car-free commuting, as do bike racks installed on the walls – just two of many eco-friendly features in the LEED Silver space.

New York firms redesign their own workspaces to boost collaboration, creativity, and productivity  
By Lisa Delgado



**NBBJ: A long table and small meeting room near the kitchen invite encounters and conversation (top) Floorplan (right) The reception area and a meeting room with translucent operable walls, and bike racks just beyond (above)**

In keeping with the focus on collaboration, the in-house design team included eight meeting areas in the new office, which underwent a gut renovation before staff moved in. The kitchen doubles as a meeting area, with a nearby large worktable. Thanks to a flat-screen monitor, the table is well suited to electronic presentations and laying out drawings and building models. Circulation on both sides prompts serendipitous encounters and conversations. "We learned in working with a lot of creative companies that in some ways, those spaces are more important than the workstation," Johnson notes. "You might get 10 great ideas in a meeting where there's five people sitting at a table. You might work all day



### A New Angle in Workstation Design

Office workers are no great fans of the Dilbert-esque cubicle. For many years, Meridian Design Associates has found success with another configuration they call the 120-degree workstation, consisting of a trio of workstations facing into the center. Though each workstation appears wider than a typical cube – making it more inviting – MDA has found that the manufacturing costs are only about 80% of a standard cube. Plus, more 120-degree workstations can fit into the same amount of space.

Forming a variety of group configurations, the workstations offer a refreshing change from the sameness of rows of cubes. “We believe that’s a fundamental human need: to have a clarity, to have a differentiation, to have uniqueness,” says managing principal Bice Wilson, AIA. Working with several manufacturers, they’ve used the design successfully in their own office and for clients. Their only regret: failing to seek a patent when they started using it.



MERIDIAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

and have just one at your desk. We’re in the idea-harvesting business, and the quicker we get to the best idea, the more successful we’ll be.”

Wi-Fi and a growing fleet of laptops also help the now 60-member New York staff collaborate in various spaces throughout the office. Some enclosed meeting rooms feature a SMART Board and an LED projector, as well as WebEx and videoconferencing gear, useful for meetings about overseas projects. Individual workstations have low dividers, fostering open collaboration; acoustic ceilings help keep the noise level down.

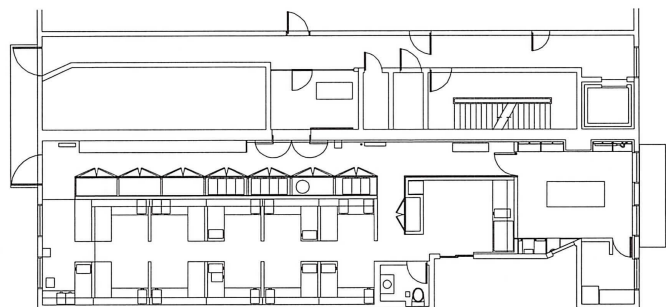
Victoria Meyers, AIA, partner of hMa, also focused on boosting efficiency and interaction in a renovation of her firm’s Chelsea office last year. Before, the 2,000-square-foot space was divided by a conference room that had very little natural light; the firm’s then eight employees were scattered on either end of the space, away from each other. In such a small, tight-knit office, the separation felt unnatural. The redesign involved placing the conference room at the far end, near windows, to make it brighter and more inviting; the open-plan workstations are now clustered together just beyond a new reception area.

Now, “in terms of the workflow of the space, we’re much more efficient,” Meyers observes. “Everybody’s in the same space; everyone can see what everyone else is doing.” Adds partner Tom Hanrahan, AIA, “We tend not to make or design anything that doesn’t get scrutinized by everybody in the office, so it’s better that everything’s out in the open. It makes for a messy but dynamic environment.” By contrast, the pristine conference room provides the more public face of the now 12-member firm, a spot to meet with clients during the day or host an evening event. Featuring energy-efficient fluorescent lighting and recycled and nontoxic materials, the new

hanrahanMeyers architects: Staff is now clustered in one area instead of at either end of the space (top) Floorplan (middle) The “Topo Table” designed by Meyers anchors the conference room (bottom)



MICHAEL MORAN



HANRAHANMEYERS ARCHITECTS

space is also a better showcase for the firm’s strengths in sustainable design.

The renovation has helped the firm win new clients, according to Meyers. “And I think we just feel better,” she says. “When we’re in a competitive interview situation, it’s like the difference between showing up in a really spiffy Armani suit and showing up in a really cheap suit and seeing your competition dressed in Chanel.” She adds, “If you’re an architect, this is your clothing.”



MICHAEL MORAN

**Lisa Delgado** is a freelance journalist who has written for *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *e-Oculus*, *Blueprint*, and *Wired*, among other publications.

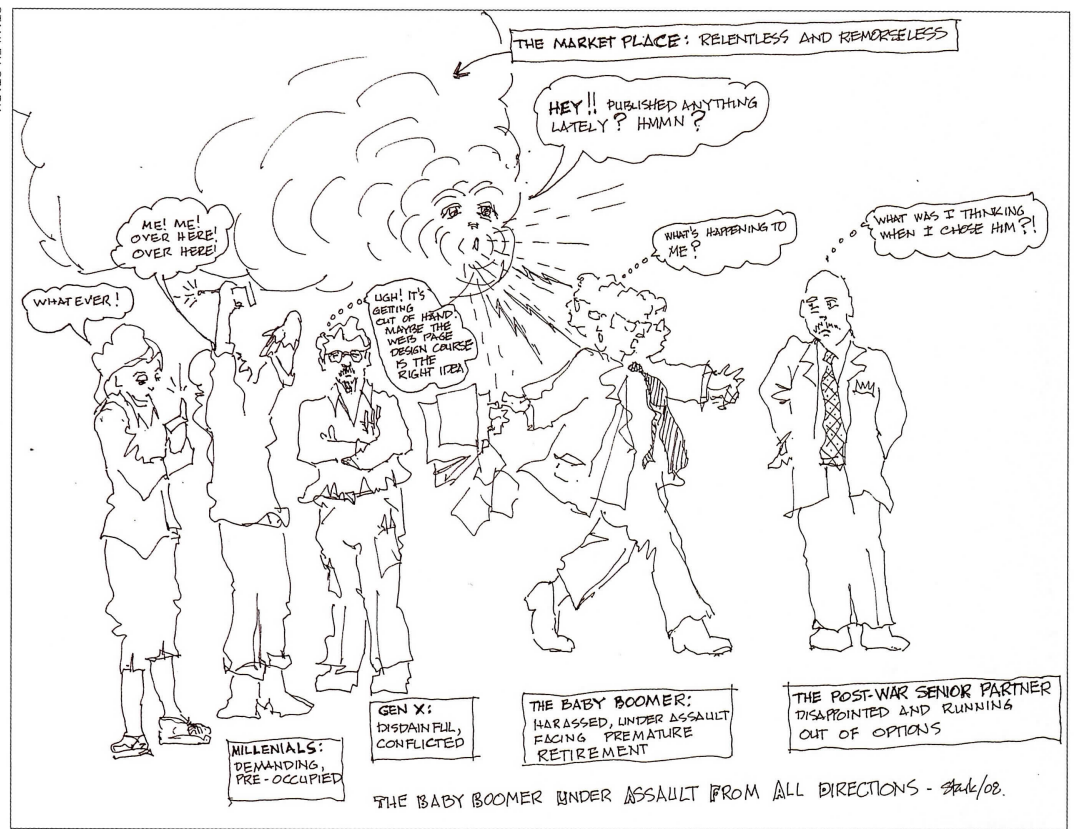
NBBJ Design Team: Alan Young, AIA, LEED AP, Christine Vandover, IIDA, LEED AP, Angelina Pinto, Ignacio Iratchet  
General Contractor: Lehr  
MEP: Atkinson, Koven, Feinberg Engineers  
Furnishings: Arenson Office Furnishings; dTank

hanrahanMeyers architects Design Team: Victoria Meyers, AIA, Tom Hanrahan, AIA, Akira Nakamura  
Contractor: J. Lauda and Company, Inc.  
Custom woodworking: Hisao Hanafusa/Miya Shoji Interiors  
Lighting: Delray; Lightolier  
Paint: Benjamin Moore Eco Spec



# Office Culture: Making Sense of the Generation Gap

STANLEY STARK



If you think your staff's age differences don't matter, think again

By Dr. Joseph D. Rei and F. Leigh Branham

Architecture firms are project-based businesses that constantly form and re-form project teams. As such, research suggests, they are likely to be affected more than any other type of firm by generational differences in staff members.

Sweeping changes over the last 30 years, such as increasing divorce rates, single parenthood, and global competition, mixed in with the proliferation of video games and computer access, have deeply shaped the way different generations perceive themselves and the workplace. Architecture firm leaders must deal daily with perceived stereotypes – even if inaccurate – in managing their practices.

For example, Millennials and Gen-Xers who have watched parents lose their jobs after lifetimes of sacrificing for their companies cannot grasp why they should be loyal to an uncaring employer. They seek a new deal. They believe they cannot realistically expect lifetime employment but instead expect lifetime employability. They want challenging assignments and opportunities to learn. Knowing they have other employment options, they insist on better management and greater flexibility about where and when they work.

The Advanced Management Institute for Architecture and Engineering (AMI) recently completed a survey of 155 managers and staff of several professional services firms. The survey found that 96% of respondents agreed that inter-generational teamwork was very important to their firm's success. Yet 76% also said that generational differences have created major hurdles, such as poor communication, reduced quality, declining productivity, loss of teamwork, and lower morale. The result in many workplaces has been polarization of generations. Workers at opposite ends of the age ladder have taken a "we're right, you're wrong" position, and are unwilling to meet halfway.

The immediate challenge for leaders is to acknowledge and manage perceived differences that could undermine teamwork and productivity. For example, today's workers are often associated with the following stereotypes:

**Traditionalists (born 1945 and before):** duty-bound and hardworking, but may be seen as inflexible and resistant to change. Many Traditionalists:

- Lack technological skills
- Value loyalty, compliance, and dues-paying
- Expect younger generations to value what they value
- Believe their way is the right or only way
- Are beginning to disengage as they approach retirement

**Boomers (born 1946–1964):** ambitious and participative, but may be seen as overly political and self-interested. Many Boomers:

- Are blocking the upward advancement of many Gen-Xers by their mere presence
- Believe "if you train 'em, they'll just leave"
- Believe in and practice hands-off management
- Have sacrificed family and work-life balance for career advancement
- Believe many Gen-Xers and Millennials lack a work ethic
- Expect younger generations to value what they value

**Generation Xers (born 1965–1980):** seen as independent and resourceful, but may be cynical and disrespectful. Many Gen-Xers:

- Are frustrated with limited promotional opportunities
- Feel more loyalty to their own careers than to the organization
- Consider self-employment a desirable option
- Believe it doesn't matter when and where they work as long as they get the job done



- Want to have rich personal and family lives outside of work
- Are impatient with “unrealistic expectations” of Millennials

**Millennials (born 1981 and after):** self-confident and technically sophisticated, but may be seen as dependent and naïve. Many Millennials:

- Have received intense parental attention, structure, feedback, and coaching
- Expect to receive the same from workplace managers
- Believe they are special and deserve praise and recognition
- Expect their jobs to be challenging and meaningful
- Want a variety of activities (besides work) in their work week
- Like Gen-Xers, believe it doesn't matter when and where they work as long as they get the job done
- Do not hesitate to move on

The initial step in building a team with these differences is to recognize some undeniable facts. First is the changing composition of the workforce. With 78 million Boomers on the threshold of retirement, only 44 million Gen-Xers in line to take their places, and most Millennials just entering the workforce and short on experience, the workplace will look very different in 10 years. As the economy continues to grow at the expected rate of 3% per year, the challenge for employers is to deal with future shortages of talent and leadership.

Second is that the very size of the Gen-X age group may cause challenges in ownership transition. Gen-X is the smallest of all current groups in the American workforce. In 10 years there will be fewer potential purchasers and leaders in architectural firms than when Boomers rose to the top in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

This situation has several potential impacts. Will your firm have internal buyers with enough wealth to purchase shares? Will you have to sell shares to employees who are younger than you would like? When making a transition, are you separating ownership issues from leadership issues? Will there be enough leaders? Will they be ready?

Leaders with foresight and longer-term perspectives are investing in succession management, creative recruiting, employee retention, and, above all, engagement initiatives. The latter includes giving employees challenging and enriching assignments, creating a culture of continuous feedback, coaching, and terminating non-performers who don't respond to coaching. So when the talent crunch occurs in about 2010, these firms will be seen as destination employers.

Third, the different expectations and needs of multiple generations should not be taken lightly. Senior managers are being challenged to adapt their managerial styles so individuals and teams perform at their highest levels. Different employees will have different needs, and even those may change over time. Savvy leaders know best which needs count now.

However, regardless of age, race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, education, personality, or disability, remember that all employees deserve:

- A job that matches their talents
- Recognition and fair pay for a job well done
- Respect, clear expectations, coaching, and feedback
- Trustworthy leaders
- Reasonable work demands
- Opportunities to learn and grow

- Upbeat relations with co-workers
- Reasonable expectation of job security and belief in the organization's stability

### Where do we go from here?

The AMI survey of employee attitudes asked the question, “What should we do about inter-generational challenges?” Here are the top responses:

- 34% - Train all employees to understand and accept generational differences
- 27% - Increase coaching of younger generations
- 22% - Train managers to manage and motivate other generations
- 7% - Be more selective in hiring
- 6% - Do nothing at this time
- 2% - Use selective termination
- 2% - Other: have more social events, mixed teams, etc.

What of the 6% of employees who advocate doing “nothing at this time?” Perhaps in some firms, inter-generational teamwork and communication are so smooth that no more needs to be done. Or, perhaps there are firms with so few Millennials on staff that they haven't felt the full force of changing expectations. Still, doing “nothing at this time” is exactly the wrong way to go, as the issue will be of increasing concern.

AMI also organized a focus group to establish best practices for managing an inter-generational architectural firm. Here are the group's suggestions:

- Raise employee self-awareness. Tools such as the Harrison Assessment and Myers-Briggs can help employees better understand their own personalities and working styles.
- Allow interns to design their own Intern Development Program.
- Provide meaningful training and development opportunities. Though young workers don't expect lifetime employment with one firm, they do value lifelong learning that makes them important contributors to firms throughout their career. Paradoxically, they are more likely to stay with firms that make them more widely employable.
- Allow younger workers to choose or gravitate to preferred mentors.
- Train mentors in coaching and mentoring skills.
- Encourage younger employees to “reverse” mentor older staff, and convince older staff to seek such mentoring.
- Allow interns to propose their own training topics and invite senior staff to take part.
- Identify early adopters of newer technologies among older generations. They may be better able to communicate with their peers.
- Teach principles of change management and how to overcome resistance to change. Show all employees why simple logic does not always convince resisters.
- Teach employees to listen. It's key to managing change.

**Joseph D. Rei, Ph.D.**, is director of executive development at AMI. He works with design firms to develop high-performing organizations.

**F. Leigh Branham** serves as a consultant with AMI, working with design firms to analyze root causes of turnover and employee disengagement. He is author of *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*.





# The Path to Licensure

Efforts to make it smoother, straighter,  
shorter – and free of detours

By Carolyn Sponza, AIA

Long gone are the days of the apprentice designer practicing under the master architect to develop a comprehensive set of design skills. As the profession has evolved, so have the methods for gaining the necessary education and experience that lead to licensure.

During the first half of 2008, the AIA New York Chapter, led by its Emerging New York Architects and Professional Practice committees, conducted roundtables with members, students, and large firm representatives to identify the challenges of getting an architect's license in New York City. (The large firm roundtable was held in conjunction with the New York Building Congress's Architects Leadership Council.) Concerns about the state of internship and licensure differed greatly. Smaller firms focused primarily on their limited access to resources like study materials and support groups. Large firms discussed the practices they have adopted to improve the Intern Development Program (IDP) and Architect Registration Examination (ARE). Some concerns were shared by both groups.

**Understanding IDP changes.** The current intern development and licensure standards have been evolving rapidly since their start in the mid-1970s. Only within the past 10 years has IDP been mandatory for licensure in New York State. As a result, each segment of today's four-generation architectural workforce has had very different experiences with internship and licensure during their careers. According to Mark Behm, Assoc. AIA, IDP coordinator for both AIANY and the firm Mancini Duffy, "Mentors or supervisors are typically seasoned professionals and may not necessarily be in tune with younger professionals and their needs." To bridge this gap and distribute information about changes in the process, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards



(NCARB) is asking every firm, AIA chapter, and university to identify IDP coordinators within their organizations. Panelists reported that improving communication is essential, since IDP's complexity makes it difficult to navigate, especially for supervisors.

Stephen Luk, AIA, an associate at BBG-BBGM, reports that mentoring programs can also be effective. BBG-BBGM is about to revamp its in-house program with a focus on training senior staff how to mentor. "The lack of interest in the old mentorship program," Luk says, "was caused by the lack of structured training available for mentors."

**Fulfilling learning units.** Though firms track IDP involvement differently, a candidate's success relies largely upon his or her manager's ability to hand out assignments that provide the most well-rounded experience. According to Venesa Alicea, Assoc. AIA, AIANY associate director and chapter IDP coordinator, "Firms are beginning to embrace the IDP process," but, despite their best efforts, "it is the responsibility of the intern architects to speak up and educate the office as to their needs."

**"The lack of interest in the old mentorship program was caused by the lack of structured training available for mentors."**  
Stephen Luk, AIA

**Complications of specialization.** Panelists observed that industry pressures force intern architects to specialize too early. Specialization provides efficiency in large firms and is necessary in the work of some smaller firms. However, it reduces the likelihood that individuals will be able to fulfill their IDP requirements, which call for training across 16 different categories. According to a 2003 ArchVoices/AIA National Associates Committee Internship & Career Survey, 5.5% of interns who completed IDP left one position for another in order to do so.

**Promoting IDP/ARE concurrency.** Though NCARB statistics indicate an increase in first-time licensees in recent years, the perception is that the number of newly registered architects in New York City is dropping, with attrition occurring at a greater rate for those five or more years out of school. This decline is attributed to the fact that interns continue to take on more time-intensive assignments as they progress further into their careers and, simply, that life gets in the way. A move is under way to help interns fulfill IDP/ARE requirements simultaneously. (About 10 state licensing boards now promote this practice.) Allowing interns to take the exam immediately after graduation will help condense the training process and bring more licensed architects into the profession.

**Engaging universities.** Abridging the licensure process will be effective only if students enter the workforce already engaged in IDP. One firm reported that it requires summer interns to sign up for IDP prior to graduation as a condition of employment. While this may be effective, the most direct way to get students focused is by sending architects into the schools to mentor with an emphasis on professional development issues.

**Cost vs. incentives.** The licensure process is expensive, costing candidates more than \$1,800 from initial enrollment through registration. Few smaller firms cover the costs or time off needed to take the exam, which can leave interns wondering if the associated benefits

**"Mentors or supervisors are typically seasoned professionals and may not necessarily be in tune with younger professionals and their needs."**

Mark Behm, Assoc. AIA

exceed their expenditures. Several candidates working for smaller firms even reported that they were discouraged from getting a license, as becoming registered implied they were more likely to leave the firm. Conversely, large firms often pay the costs of the exam, with some requiring licensure for promotion to associate level or higher.

To provide support for intern architects, AIANY is setting up a mentoring program and a series of ARE study sessions. These efforts, coupled with increased communication, will also bolster firms' in-house programs. "The offices are very excited about supporting their interns," Alicea says. "They just need to know where to start and what is needed."

Carolyn Sponza, AIA, is an associate with Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners in New York, and Vice President for Professional Development at the AIA New York Chapter.

## DECODING THE ACRONYMS

**National standardization of the professional development leading to licensure has undergone rapid transformation over the past three decades. Discussions often begin with two sets of acronyms – IDP and ARE.**

### Intern Development Program (IDP)

**Administered by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), IDP has been under development since the early 1970s. The original intent of the program was to ensure that interns' first years in the profession were characterized by a comprehensive and varied set of experiences. The first IDP pilot programs were launched in a handful of states in 1976; New York State added IDP as a prerequisite for registration in 1999. Today, 49 states use IDP as a benchmark for registration. See [www.ncarb.org/IDP/index.html](http://www.ncarb.org/IDP/index.html) for more information. For questions about IDP, email: [idp@aiany.org](mailto:idp@aiany.org).**

### Architect Registration Examination (ARE)

**Though various state and regional boards have required licensure since the early 1900s, the ARE that most closely resembles today's examination was only implemented nationally in 1983. In 1997, this once-yearly test was changed to a computerized exam that allows candidates to schedule each of its divisions separately. In May 2008, NCARB introduced ARE 4.0, which reduced the number of divisions offered from nine to seven, changing the format of each section to a combination of graphic vignettes and multiple-choice questions. See [www.ncarb.org/ARE/overview.html](http://www.ncarb.org/ARE/overview.html).**



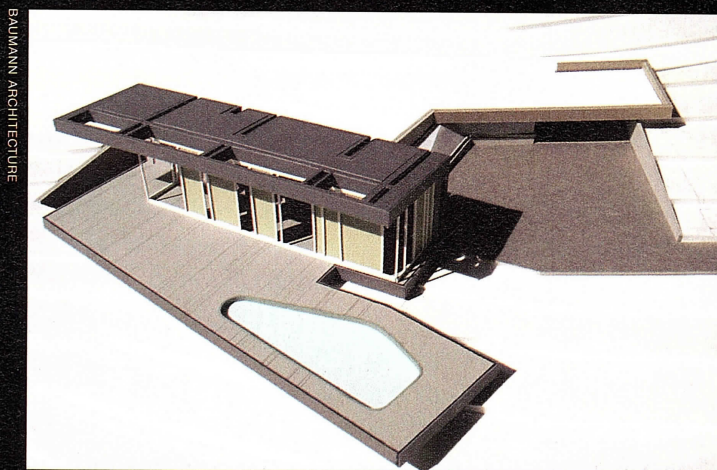
# New Kids on the Block

New Practices New York  
2008 winners talk shop  
By Linda G. Miller

## Baumann Architecture

"We're not interested in Blobs. Bamboo. FlexibleTypologies. ABC Carpets. Patch Dynamics. Motility. Adobe." So says Philippe Baumann in what the jury referred to as his "manifesto." Baumann strikes an oppositional stance to current architectural trends, rarefied academic discourse, the mundane and overused, and the green bandwagon. In his opinion, there is nothing new under the sun when it comes to making buildings – hours are long, budgets are tight, designs are compromised, client interaction can be exhausting, and production can be never-ending.

Baumann, who teaches at Pratt and Parsons and maintains a small office in the Flatiron District, cycles through architecture students, one at a time, as assistants. He collaborates with artists, glass-blowers, photographers, and computer technicians to find a more holistic approach to building. Baumann also likes working with clients who are artists, especially those he feels make a positive contribution to the cultural atmosphere of the city.



**Baumann Architecture: House for Two Psychoanalysts, Hoosick, NY**



**Common Room: New Practices New York submission portfolio**

Six firms were selected last June as winners of the New Practices New York 2008 competition from the 52 portfolios submitted. The competition is open to New York City-based firms that have at least one licensed partner and were incorporated after January 1, 2002.

The jury included a 2007 winner, Amale Andraos (WORKac); Jennifer Carpenter (TRUCK); Peter Eisenman, FAIA (Eisenman Architects); William Menking (*The Architect's Newspaper*); and Charles Renfro, AIA (Diller Scofidio + Renfro). The jurors unanimously gave a special commendation to Urban A&O for its graphic representation, project focus, and design abilities – the first time a firm has received such recognition in the biennial competition, which was launched in 2006.

While the winning firms may differ in size, scope, skill sets, work volume, and philosophy, each is in the process of developing a unique message and mission.

"The physical acts of drawing, measuring, cutting, and gluing form the creative backbone of our work," says Baumann. The results – fabricated cardboard models, computer studies, and refined hand drawings – "are absorbed and reworked in a process to distill our design strategies," he adds. Currently he is working on a single-story warehouse live/work space for a sculptor in East Williamsburg. What began as a gut renovation and plans for sheetrock walls to define studio/storage and living spaces expanded into replacing the front façade, adding a concrete radiant floor, and demolishing a rear portion of the building to make room for a garden and a massive glazed wall to the adjoining building. "Good work," he concludes, "is hard to do in any milieu, however innovative, especially in a city like New York with its combination of irreverence, planned obsolescence, construction quality, DOB requirements, tight sites, and expensive labor that makes building here difficult."

**Baumann's advice:** "Take any project that comes your way and use it to investigate what's compelling to you, and do what you can get until you get to choose."



## Common Room

Prior to sharing an office space, Lars Fischer, Maria Ibanez, and Todd Rouhe kept crossing paths in their professional lives. With the formation of their practice, which now includes two employees, the triumvirate has created a flexible work environment where they can work independently or team up on projects. One project is Common Room 2, an exhibition space in the lobby of their office building on the Lower East Side. The partners curate exhibitions that focus on works they feel engage the community in a dialogue about the built environment.

Canada, another exhibition space the firm designed nearby, expands the relationship between art and architecture into a discussion about cultural production and space. Working with the gallerists, the architects explored what happens when display space blurs into workspace, and where the display of operations becomes as important as the display of art.

"Common Room defines itself through the contingent relationship of workplace to community," says Rouhe. "Every project is guided by

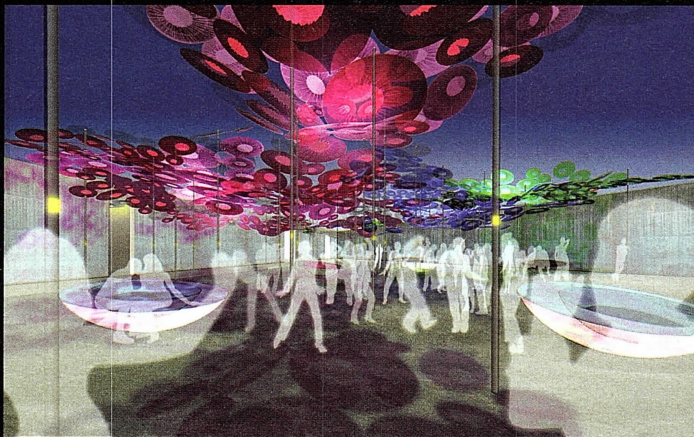
won through an RFP. According to Wheeler, the firm had commissions early on and was busy "just doing the work." By default, exhibition design became a specialty.

The firm's "Delightscope" was a finalist in the 2008 P.S.1/MoMA Young Architects Program and exhibited at MoMA this fall. "We are attracted to projects that allow participation in the act of construction," says Wheeler, "giving us more time to develop our ideas while reducing the task of dictating them to others through documents or files."

**Zollinger and Wheeler's advice:** "It is important to do projects outside your comfort zone. It makes you wiser."

## Openshop | Studio

Partners Adam Hayes and Mark Kroeckel wanted their firm to remain "under the radar" during its formative stage. A recent story in *Dwell* magazine about their Hive Loft made that a moot point. This Brooklyn residence blurred the appeal of living in an industrial loft with the need



HARRY ZERNIKE

**Matter Practice: "Delightscope," a finalist in the 2008 P.S.1/MoMA Young Architects Program**



**Openshop | Studio: A "visual dictionary" for a residential client**

a reconsideration of the everyday (public and private) specific to each local situation. An expanded field of collaborators influences our design ethic and built work."

**Fischer, Ibanez, and Rouhe's advice:** "Define the priorities ascribed to (modern) architecture and practice for yourself. Pursue and refine that definition in every project you work on."

## Matter Practice

Brooklyn-based Matter is engaged in architectural and exhibition design and speculative and design-build projects – acting as architect, educator, museum content developer, and precision machinist. The husband and wife partners, Alfred Zollinger (who currently teaches at Parsons) and Sandra Wheeler, met when they were collaborators at Michigan's Cranbrook Academy of Art. The couple decided to work on one design-build project per year in addition to other projects. This year, the firm, which now has three employees, designed the exhibition "Green Community" for the National Building Museum,

for privacy by avoiding the use of traditional partitions. Every aspect of the project – client, site, budget, function, etc. – was carefully investigated and used as information to shape form.

For each client, the architects create a customized "visual dictionary" or "look book." A combination wish list and Rorschach test, the book documents the thoughts of the architects and client from start to completion of a project.

The partners met while attending Rice University and currently teach – Hayes at Pratt, and Kroeckel at Barnard. Their practice has grown to include five employees, but "staying true to what we believe in determines what projects we take on and which ones we don't," says Kroeckel.

**Hayes and Kroeckel's advice:** "Have a partner who is a true collaborator; research everything, work fast, and think slow."



### Urban A&O (Special Commendation)

Urban A&O (short for Alpha and Omega) got on the local map with a 12-foot-long wall screen called the “Bone Wall.” It was designed as part of a 2006 Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) faculty research project on parametric design, then exhibited at the Storefront for Art and Architecture. In summer of 2008, founding principal Joe McDonald jetted back and forth to Beijing to oversee the construction of his firm’s competition-winning design (in collaboration with Thinc Design) for the Johnson & Johnson Beijing Olympic Pavilion on the Green. This project, as well as “The Water Planet” exhibit (also with Thinc) at the new Steinhart Aquarium in Renzo Piano’s California Academy of Sciences, is destined to put Urban A&O on the international map.

An associate professor of architecture at the GSD, McDonald looks for imaginative intersections between art, science, architecture, and technology. Urban A&O is heavily invested in parametric modeling and its subsequent fabrication processes, working with companies in the automotive and aerospace industries. Located in the West

customized single-family house, in which the detailed development of the design is grounded in materiality and tectonics. Wallance, who graduated from the Cooper Union School of Architecture and teaches at Columbia University, views the transformation of construction from on-site craft methods to factory production as inevitable, particularly for building types based on repetitive systems.

The firm has been working with Global Building Modules concentrating on shipping containers as large yet economically transportable volumetric units, and developing a new building system based on the logic of prefabrication and transportation. Sharing space in the Garment District, the firms have tapped experts in shipping logistics, overseas procurement, and intellectual property law. The fruits of this high-design/low-cost modular system endeavor will be realized at 372 Lafayette Street, a six-story luxury residential co-op that illustrates Wallance’s belief that “architecture in its built form is not merely a representation of an idea, but the idea itself.”

JOE MCDONALD / URBAN A&O



**Urban A&O (with Thinc Design): Johnson & Johnson Beijing Olympic Pavilion**

DAVID WALLANCE ARCHITECT



**David Wallance Architect: 372 Lafayette Street**

Village, the firm has six architects, all in their early 30s, with parallel education tracks and teaching appointments. There are no titles or project managers, and design decisions are made via dialogue until the team reaches a consensus. The team works as a unit around a 20-foot-long table, focusing on one project for two to three days, then moving on to the next. “Ethos drives our work,” says McDonald. “We take great pride in the fact that the majority of our work gets built.”

**McDonald’s advice:** “Some problems of having a new practice are related to business management. We have a generous benefit package and salaries higher than other young firms’ to retain employees with extraordinary skill sets.”

### David Wallance Architect

After working as a journeyman in two internationally known offices, David Wallance, AIA, started his own practice, which currently has two employees. His firm has two distinct areas of focus – prefabricated buildings based on shipping container technologies, and the

**Wallance’s advice:** “Attract the most talented, capable, and motivated people you can find, and keep your overhead low.”

**Linda G. Miller** is a New York City-based freelance writer.

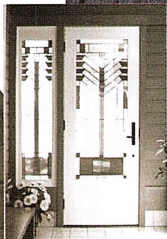
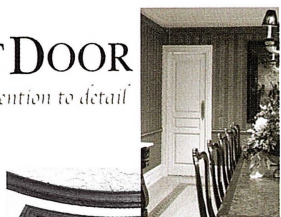




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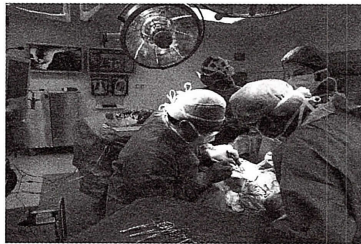
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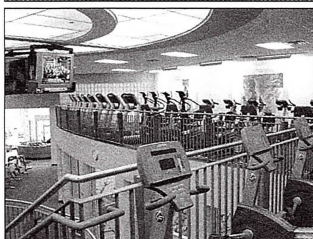
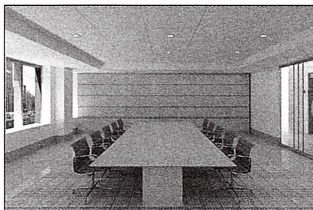
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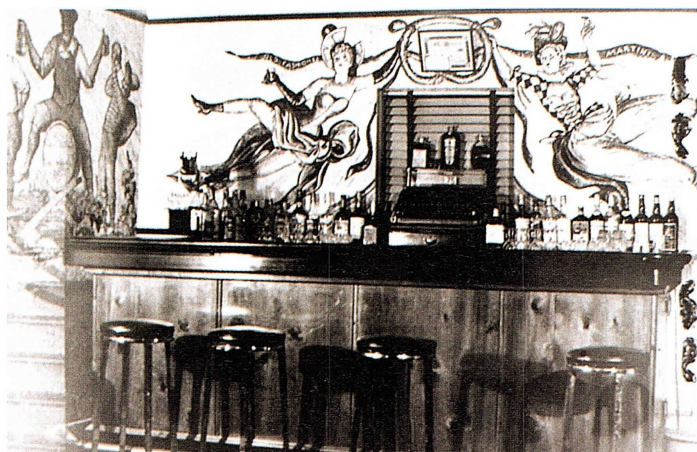
# 50-Year Watch

The profession's bygone  
cluster in the East 40s  
By John Morris Dixon, FAIA

In 1958, the year I first worked in Manhattan, New York architects were remarkably concentrated in East Midtown. The Architects Building, then at 101 Park Avenue, sheltered dozens of firms, with many others very close by. On the street floor of "101" was the Architectural Materials Center, an extensive showroom with samples and mockups of building products.

Just around the corner from "101" were the conjoined townhouses at 115 East 40th Street that contained offices for the Architectural League, the AIA New York Chapter, and the Municipal Art Society, plus a dining room, a bar, galleries, and some studios. Records show that the League leased the townhouses starting in 1927, and all three organizations departed in 1966. In 1970, these buildings were demolished, and in 1979 the old 101 Park was replaced by the present catty-cornered office tower.

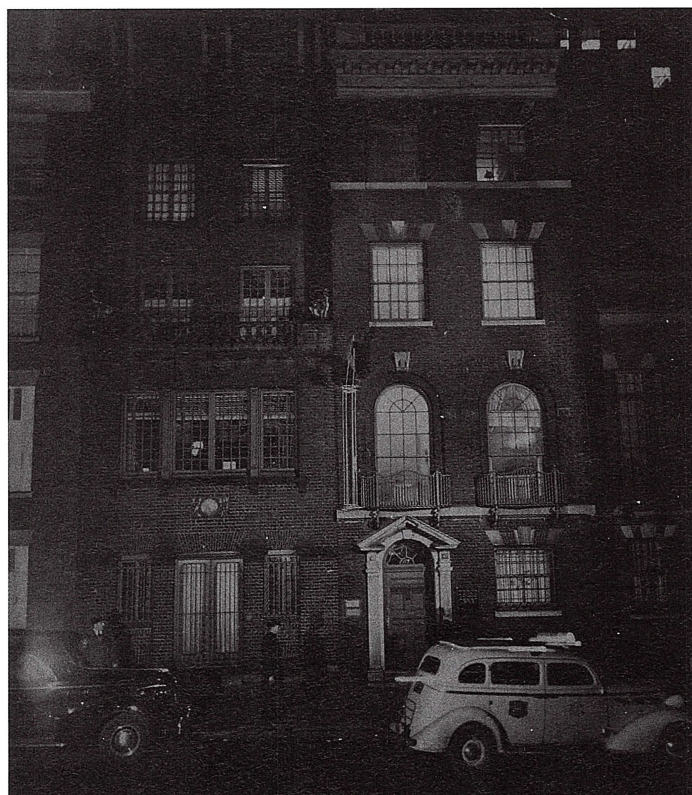
The New York Chapter pages of an AIA national directory from 1957 list Manhattan addresses for 502 members. Of these, that single building at 101 Park accounted for 61 members – 12% of those listed in the borough. A total of 179 (36%) were located in the East 40s, 96 more close by in the East 30s or 50s, and another 78 at nearby West Midtown locations, including Rockefeller Center. Only 69 members (just a few more than at 101 Park) were located below 30th Street.



COURTESY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE OF NEW YORK

Eighty AIANY members gave addresses above 60th Street, mainly on the Upper East Side, but many of these appear to be home, rather than office, addresses. The workplaces of some of these architects – along with others listed at suburban addresses – may have been in that same East Midtown concentration.

In this prime business area, architects' offices mingled with those of major corporate clients. Clearly, the appeal of this area was its proximity to Grand Central, hence to the trains serving Westchester and Fairfield counties. In those baby-boom years, professionals with families were expected to live in the suburbs. In the 1950s, only the poor and the wealthy were expected to raise kids in the city. This mindset was about to shift sharply around 1960, when architects began to spearhead the brownstone revival movement.



COURTESY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE OF NEW YORK

**Above: Linked former townhouses on 40th Street just east of Park Avenue housed AIANY, the Architectural League, and related organizations between 1927 and 1966 (the cars date the exterior photo to the 1930s)**  
**Left: The bar may have been redecorated repeatedly**

By 1958, real-estate values around this Midtown hub were propelling the transformation of Park Avenue in the East 50s from residential to office use, and some prestigious firms soon relocated there. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was listed at 575 Madison Avenue in the 1957 AIA directory, but would soon move to a new building at 425 Park Avenue (55th Street), while Philip Johnson was settling into the recently completed Seagram Building. All three national magazines of the time were within walking distance of the East 40th Street concentration: *Progressive Architecture* at 430 Park Ave (55th Street), *Architectural Forum* in Rockefeller Center, and *Architectural Record* at 119 West 42nd Street.

Although the three organizations housed at 115 East 40th Street were reunited for a while in the Urban Center at 457 Madison Avenue starting in 1980, by then even the most prestigious architecture firms were dispersing to areas that offered the large volumes of space architects needed at moderate rents. Just as in other cities, Manhattan's architectural firms were leaving the prime commercial hub for more diverse – and generally more colorful – digs.

John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* magazine from 1972 to 1996. In recent years he has written for *Architectural Record*, *Architecture*, and other publications.



# What Makes a Merger Work?

## Good Practices

Here's what three architectural firms found out.

By Ralph Steinglass, FAIA

There has been a startling increase in the number of mergers involving New York-area architectural firms in the last 12 months. This is due perhaps to the downturn in the economy and the urgent need for design firms to diversify and stay competitive.

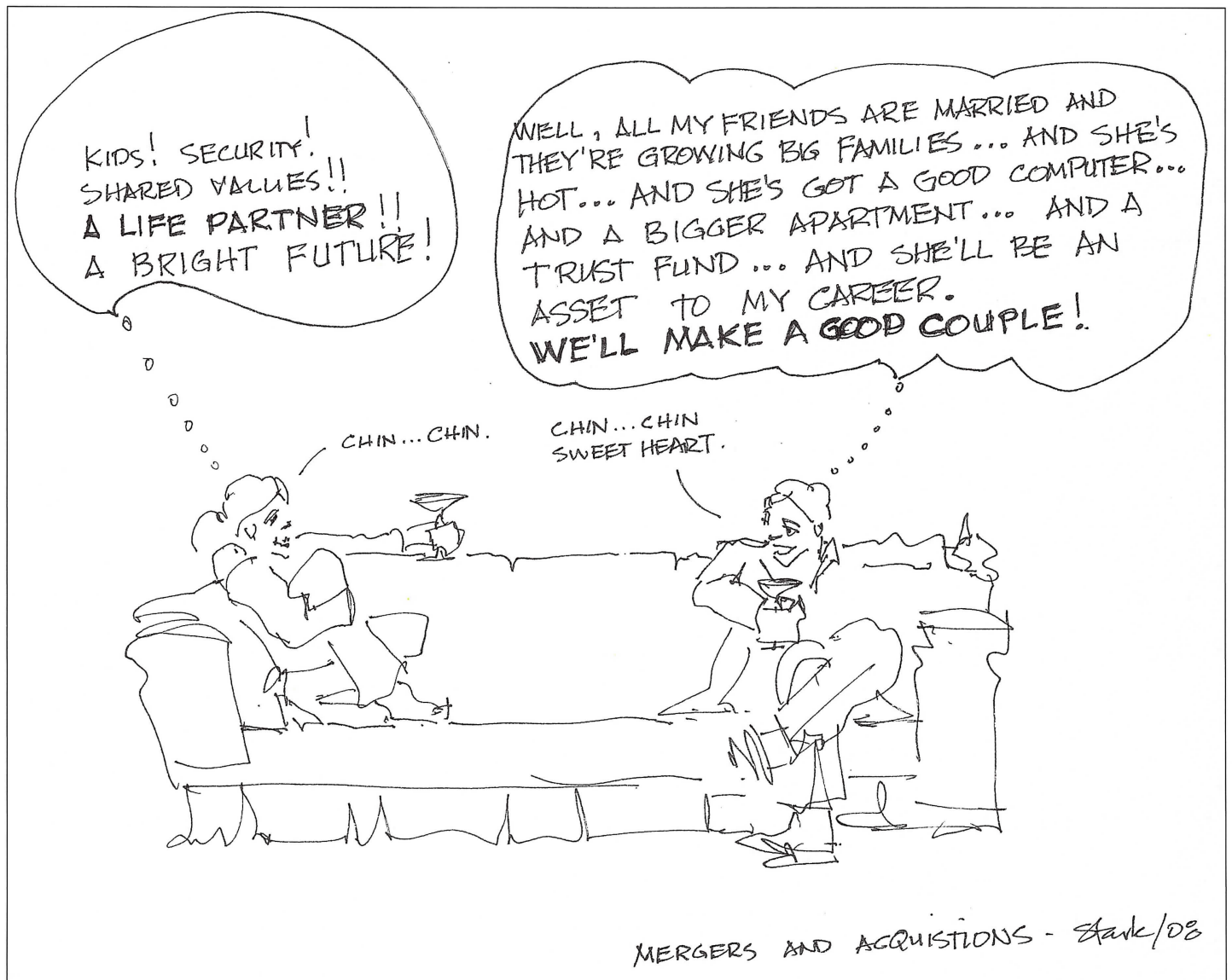
In April, the AIA Professional Practice Committee invited Mark Strauss, FAIA, AICP, LEED AP, of FXFOWLE Architects; Tom Fridstein, FAIA, RIBA, LEED AP, of RMJM Hillier; and Magnus Magnusson, AIA, of Magnusson Architecture and Planning, to share their firsthand experience in the mergers of their firms with larger practices. At the well-attended meeting at the Center for Architecture, the three men candidly explained why they decided to merge their practices, how they evaluated the pros and cons, what their transition process looked like, and how they overcame the most difficult challenges – or, as in the case of Magnusson, how unresolved challenges eventually influenced the decision to end the relationship.

## Why Merge?

Growth and diversity were primary reasons why the larger firms sought mergers, exemplified by Larson Shein Ginsberg's merger with Magnusson in 1998, and Fox & Fowle's (now FXFOWLE) merger with Jambhekar Strauss in 2000. Greater financial security and a more robust managerial infrastructure motivated the smaller firms. In both cases, the larger firms took the first steps, initially making the process reactive.

By the late 1990s, Strauss and partner Sudhir Jambhekar, FAIA, LEED AP, had grown their boutique urban design and planning practice to 20 people and had received offers from major engineering firms seeking to diversify their practices. The offers were financially attractive but culturally undesirable. The potential of being part of a larger organization and providing a growth strategy, however, inspired them to seek a merger partner. While looking for out-of-town architectural firms, they learned that Fox & Fowle, a New York-based busi-

STANLEY STARK





ness like themselves, with similar cultural values, might be interested.

Magnusson Architecture and Planning was a 12-person company specializing in affordable housing for community-based developers when they were approached by Larsen Shein Ginsberg, a larger firm specializing in health-care design looking to diversify its practice. What intrigued Magnusson and his co-founding principal Petr Stand, APA, was the opportunity to pursue larger projects as part of a firm with greater resources and financial security.

Growth and diversity were also key factors in RMJM's decision to merge with Hillier in 2007. However, Fridstein, then managing principal of Hillier's New York office, acknowledged that finding an exit strategy for the founding partner and majority owner that worked for everyone was the underlying reason why his firm was seeking external solutions to solve an ownership transition problem. The problem was made more challenging by the rapid growth and success Hillier had recently experienced. By 2006 it had grown to nearly 300, with a worldwide practice. But its perceived value had become greater than the firm's ability to pay. The goal was to find the right partner, with deep enough pockets, but without diminishing the character and reputation of the practice.

### Will This Work?

All three firms were deliberate and thorough in their evaluation process, exploring operational and financial considerations, and spending a lot of time with their prospective partners. They identified strengths and weaknesses, shared common goals, and addressed differences. One issue emphasized by all as most critical was "cultural fit" – did people share the same values and aspirations? Perhaps more importantly, did they have the ability to tolerate differences and adapt to new conditions? Recognizing that there are cultural differences in itself may not be sufficient, however. Determining whether people can work well together, at all levels of the organization, is the question that should be addressed. But bringing it all together is the work of the transition phase.

### Strategies and Challenges

Integration of RMJM's and Hillier's practices became the mantra of their first year together. By rejecting their normal "profit center" approach to evaluating performance of new entities, RMJM instead focused on a more collaborative approach. Total integration of staff was implemented from day one. Extensive efforts to strengthen communication and form joint teams in each regional office insured that shared business practices would be utilized throughout – not an easy task! The biggest challenges? Major infrastructure differences had to be addressed in IT, CAD, management, and marketing. Fridstein and his new partners discovered that "they all used different stuff" and, going into the second year, they're still working out the "kinks."

By contrast, Magnusson's practice became LSGM's "housing studio," keeping the group separate. This worked against integration, highlighting differences without understanding or resolution. The approach helped undermine the success of the merger.

At Fox & Fowle, Strauss and Jambhekar each headed up new practice groups, but in this case with staff from both firms – a form of "forced integration" that worked. Over the next five years, Fox & Fowle reinvented itself as FXFOWLE, sparked in part by the energy created by the merger.

Governance can also be a sticking point – for example, RMJM's more corporate, structured approach versus Hillier's less formal, participatory model. Accepting new roles that were more project-driven, requiring more global travel, with less control and responsibility for the overall practice, is an adjustment that comes more easily to some than to others – and it is a work in progress.

However, loss of control, unilateral decision-making, and perceived differences in values and aspirations became insurmountable obstacles for Magnusson and Stand. Four years after merging they decided to disengage and reinstate their firm as an independent practice. Today, with a staff of 30, including three principals, the firm is wiser and more successful in part due to lessons learned at LSGM.

### Advice to those considering mergers:

- Be clear about your objectives. Know what you want out of it and, equally important, what your new partners are looking for.
- Be open to accepting and working with differences. Although "cultural fit" is critical, a willingness to embrace diversity may be more important.
- Make sure that key staff members are sufficiently motivated with the new entity and their roles in it – or they will leave!
- Expect to be surprised. All firms need to reinvent themselves, and mergers offer a dynamic approach to change – provided you're open to new ideas.

Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, is the founder and principal of Teambuilders, Inc., a New York City-based organizational development consulting firm. Since Teambuilders' inception in 1998, Steinglass has assisted design firms in effectively managing change and developing collaborative and productive working relationships.



# Architecture on the Edge

In Print +

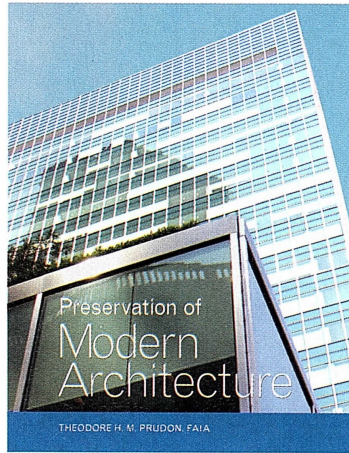
**Preservation of Modern Architecture, by Theodore H.M. Prudon, FAIA.**  
**Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008.**  
**592 pp. \$99.**

Who would have thought that Modernist structures would come to be seen as an endangered species? Yet that seems to be happening as more and more buildings from 1900 through the 1970s are pinpointed for preservation. The topic often triggers controversy; witness the current brouhaha over preservation of Boston City Hall, designed by Kallman, McKinnell & Knowles (1968), which the current Boston mayor wants to tear down. The future is also on the line for the iconic Riverview High School in Sarasota by Paul Rudolph (1958). It's odd to think that Modernism was in such disrepute in the late 1960s that any plans to demolish famous examples that had outlived their usefulness would have succumbed to the wrecker's ball, with no one complaining.

The first to tackle this challenge in an all-encompassing way is Theodore Prudon, FAIA, an architect, preservationist, and leader of the activist organization DOCOMOMO (which stands for DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MOdern MOvement). Prudon explains that when it comes to preserving modern architecture, whether or not the building works is a bigger issue than its style. Form, function, and appearance are what count; it's perfectly okay to substitute a contemporary material, product, or technology if it performs better in terms of strength, resistance to the elements, operating cost, and maintenance. Prudon points to the substitution of a transparent aluminum curtain wall for the deteriorating steel façade of Walter Gropius's 1926 Bauhaus structure in Dessau, which was renovated in 1961 and again in 1965.

In Prudon's view, a critical factor in preserving modern architecture is the original intent, which "is the visual and conceptual expression of the designer's creativity and therefore informs every aspect of both the building and its construction." His excellent chapter "Evolving Preservation Philosophies and Standards" starts with a shrewd quote by the celebrated French restorationist Viollet-le-Duc, who reportedly said, "The adoption of absolute principles for restoration could quickly lead to the absurd."

The book's most fascinating pages are devoted to Modernism's most celebrated typologies: houses and housing, schools, concert halls, air terminals, and factories like the famous 1925 Fiat Lingotto



Factory in Turin. Chapters include case studies such as Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949); Crow Island School in Winnetka, IL (Saarinen father and son and Perkins, Wheeler & Will, 1940); the Sydney Opera House (Jørn Utzon, 1966-1973); the TWA terminal (Eero Saarinen, 1962); and the Big Three houses – the Villa Savoye (Le Corbusier, 1931), the Farnsworth House (Mies van der Rohe, 1951), and Gropius's own 1938 house in Lincoln, MA. Prudon brings up a neat three-part classification of such houses – "the house as museum," "the house as a collector's item," and, yes, "the house as house."

Prudon's approach to restoring modern architecture by looking for integrity and authenticity rather than literal preservation is a healthy one, and I hope this volume will set that tone in the decades to come.

Stephen A. Kliment, FAIA

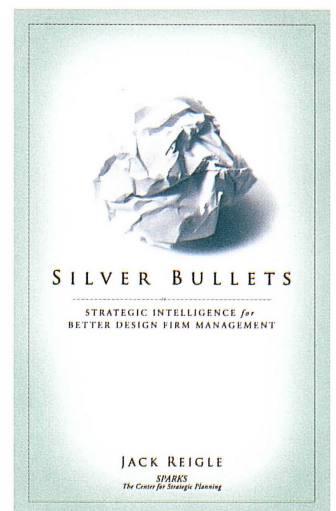
**Silver Bullets: Strategic Intelligence for Better Design Firm Management, by Jack Reigle. Minneapolis: Bascom Hill Publishing Group, 2008. 229 pp. \$39.95.**

In a design firm, a silver bullet or single-shot idea is no replacement for intelligence, long vision, and hard work. It takes several silver bullets to get the job done. So says Jack Reigle, president of SPARKS, The Center for Strategic Planning, who has a long track record of advising design firms how to move to higher levels of achievement.

Reigle's pointers include: employing the same skills you use to deliver a design project to running your entire enterprise; practicing strategic thinking and applying the big-picture perspective to knowing how systems relate; not hesitating to make decisions; putting assumptions aside and letting your mind consider alternative choices; not relying on patronage relationships, as today's clients are buying expertise. Finally, cultivate your firm's culture, whose main ingredients are organization, consistency, fairness, career-oriented programs and policies, and accommodation of personal needs, enjoyment, and satisfaction.

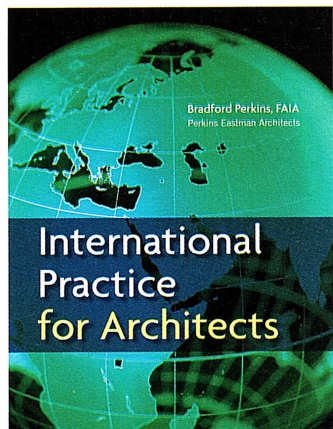
Reigle quotes Vaclav Havel, former Czech Republic president: "Vision is not enough; it must be combined with venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps; we must step up the stairs."

Stephen A. Kliment, FAIA





**International Practice for Architects, by Bradford Perkins, FAIA. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. 2007. 374 pp. \$75.**



Brad Perkins, partner in New York-based firm Perkins Eastman (700 strong at last count), reports that his employees hail from 50 countries, with partners born in Iraq, Hong Kong, and 17 other places. Along with giants such as SOM and KPF, Perkins Eastman depends on overseas billings for a fair piece of its revenue – some 20% of its 2008 billings will come from overseas work,

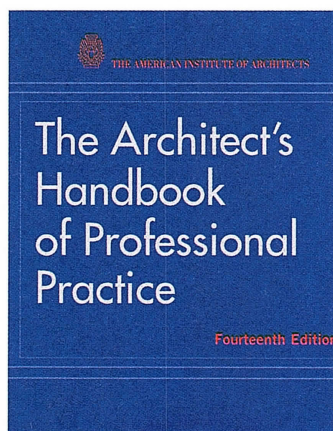
Perkins predicts. Yet 40 years ago, *Engineering News-Record's* annual “Top 500 Design Firms” listing never even referred to international work, which by 2007 was realizing a whopping \$20 billion in fees.

This formidable book should serve as a guide for any firm engaging in or contemplating overseas practice. Perkins answers the questions: How do you get the work? What types of contracts should you consider or avoid? Should you go it alone or associate with another firm? How do you deal with challenges such as local staffing, office location, quality control, licensing, tax problems, and back-and-forth communications between the project and head office? A nice bonus is Perkins' hands-on account of his worldwide travels, which make even Jules Verne look like a piker.

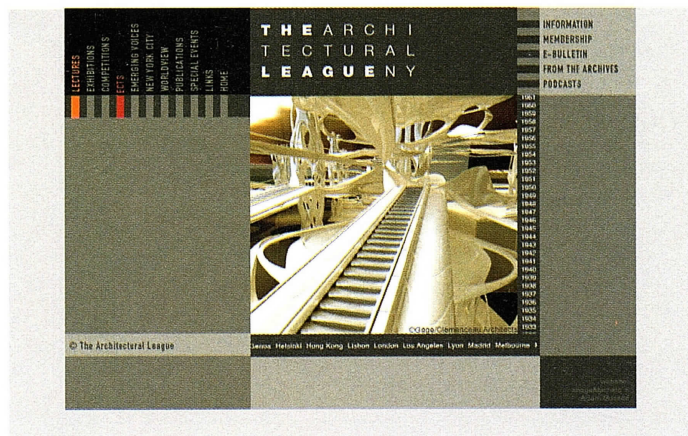
Stephen A. Kliment, FAIA

**The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice 14th Edition, by the American Institute of Architects, Joseph A. Demkin, AIA, executive editor. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008. 1,040 pp. \$250.**

What makes this edition different from earlier ones is new information on fast-evolving segments of architectural practice in programming, project management, construction contract administration, and ethics. Also covered are sustainable design, pointers for managing multiple offices, concerns of small firms, and challenges of integrated practice. There's a generous set of appendices, plus copies of the 2007 versions of the A201 General Conditions and the B101 Owner-Architect Agreement. The book comes complete with two CD-ROMs containing a searchable text of the book, along with 100 sample PDFs of all current AIA contract documents.



Stephen A. Kliment, FAIA



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(The Architectural League Digital Archive Project)

The Architectural League's plan to make itself more digitally accessible took a leap forward on its website with the addition of audio and video podcasts. These are a godsend for architects who have reluctantly missed a League event. Access to this treasure trove is easier still if you subscribe to iTunes and request automatic downloads to your computer. Or park them on your iPod or iPhone so you can listen to something more meaningful than the TV in your taxi. Presently, the menu of podcasts includes “Current Work,” such as the Cooper Union presentation by Steven Holl, FAIA, of his book *Urbanisms: Working With Doubt*. In “Emerging Voices,” the younger generation is represented, like WORKac's Amale Andraos and Dan Wood, AIA, explaining their design for “Public Farm 1” at P.S.1. More videos are featured in “Young Architects,” “Reimagining Risk,” “New York Design,” and “Studio As Muse.” Architects and anyone interested in design culture owe a debt of gratitude to The Architectural League for making this golden freebie available on our own time.

Margaret Rietveld, FAIA



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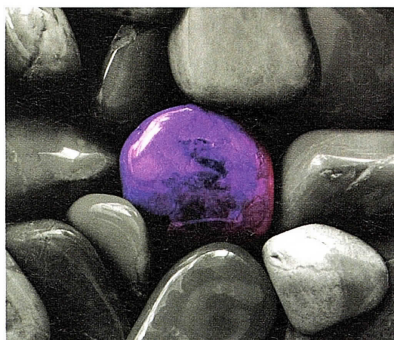
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# Up the Designed Staircase

**Mugwumps, high jumps, low slumps, big bumps**

**Don't you work as hard as you play**

**Make up, break up, everything you shake up,**

**Guess it had to be that way....**

**And everybody's getting fat, except Mama Cass.**

"Creeque Alley," 1967, by The Mamas & The Papas

**There's a sign on the wall**

**But she wants to be sure**

**Cause you know sometimes**

**Words have two meanings....**

**And she's buying a stairway to heaven.**

"Stairway to Heaven," 1971, by Robert Plant on *Led Zeppelin IV*

**Physician, heal thyself.**

**Whatever we heard was done in Capernaum,**

**do here in your hometown as well.**

Luke 4:23

At the Center for Architecture in New York, there are three floors of galleries and meeting spaces. The three levels are connected by a well-designed emergency egress stair, whose use is made inviting by Kahn-inspired detailing, designed by Andrew Berman, AIA, and by Buildings Department-approved magnetic hold opens on the fire doors. Next to the stairway and the adjacent elevator door is a bright green poster encouraging stair use. Designed by the NYC Department of Design & Construction (DDC), it says "Burn Calories, not Electricity." Going up and down this stairwell many times a day is great exercise.

I'm lucky to work in a place where the normal course of the day involves such a workout. Previously, when I worked in the DDC's atrium-building in Long Island City, the open stair and a convenience stair closer to the commissioner's office were equally beckoning. And, in another life, the fire stair in Raymond Hood's Art Deco McGraw-Hill Building seemed to be a direct connection for integrating the practice of my former firm, Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects & Planners (WBTL), and the engineering office of Edwards & Zuck, with which we frequently collaborated.

None of these stair-happy workplaces had any other fitness facilities. One WBTL project was an early version of the habitability module of NASA's international space station, designed for Grumman Aerospace. The full-scale mock-up, built in a hangar in Bethpage, Long Island, showed that the space within would be tight. Nonetheless, a stationary bicycle, with a great view through a porthole back to Earth, would attract astronauts and the architects, who pretended to be space people. The National Institute of Building Sciences describes what may be needed in the 2008 Whole Building Design

Guide: "The Physical Fitness (Exercise Room) space types provide a comprehensive, varied program of physical activities to meet the individual training regimens of its occupants. Indoor fitness programs can typically be divided into four categories of exercise: warm up/cool down, free weight, circuit training, and cardiovascular."

I've never seen an exercise bike, treadmill, or business-travel hotel-scale mini-fitness center in any design office in New York, where space is almost as precious as in the glorified trailers orbiting around outer space. Specific examples could be featured in the AIANY's conference, Fit City: Promoting Physical Activity through Design, organized in collaboration with the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

It was not always this way. Louis Sullivan talks about the importance of balancing a good mind with a good body in his *Kindergarten Chats* primer for young architects. The Walt Whitman of the Windy City, he waxes poetic on how emerging architects should get out of the office and take long walks around town to see buildings and how people use them. His own office, where Frank Lloyd Wright cut his teeth, reportedly was based on a German gymnasium, with a punching bag in the corner where architects-in-training could work out their aggressions and disagreements before client meetings.

Silicon Valley workplaces are loaded with inside-the-office fitness equipment to attract and retain valued workers. This is an attraction in a place where many have no choice but to drive to work. One of my WBTL mentors and partners, Robert Burns, FAIA, used to come to the office at 7:00 am, drop off his briefcase and drawings, and head across the street to the health club for a daily constitutional swim. Some architectural firms pay for fitness center membership, thereby reducing health insurance premiums.

Interconnecting stairs and off-site health clubs are a start, but not enough. Former New York City Council Member Ken Fisher tells a joke about architects designing the stairway to heaven: "Half the people who see it say that it leads to gentrification; the other half say that it is in the wrong location."

So this is a call for architects and designers in New York and elsewhere to carve out some social space for peer-pressure fitness within the office. Your softball teams will be in better shape, and those staying late at night will work as hard as they play.

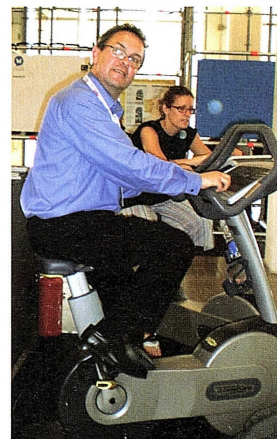
Architect, heal thyself. Whatever we heard was done in *Kindergarten Chats*, do here in your hometown as well.

## Last Words

**Rick Bell, FAIA**

**Executive Director**

**AIA New York Chapter**



**Bell burning calories on AIA exhibition floor in Torino**

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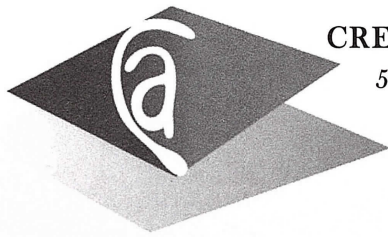
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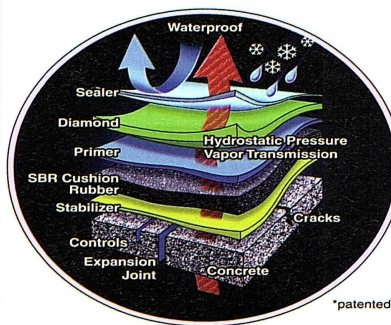
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