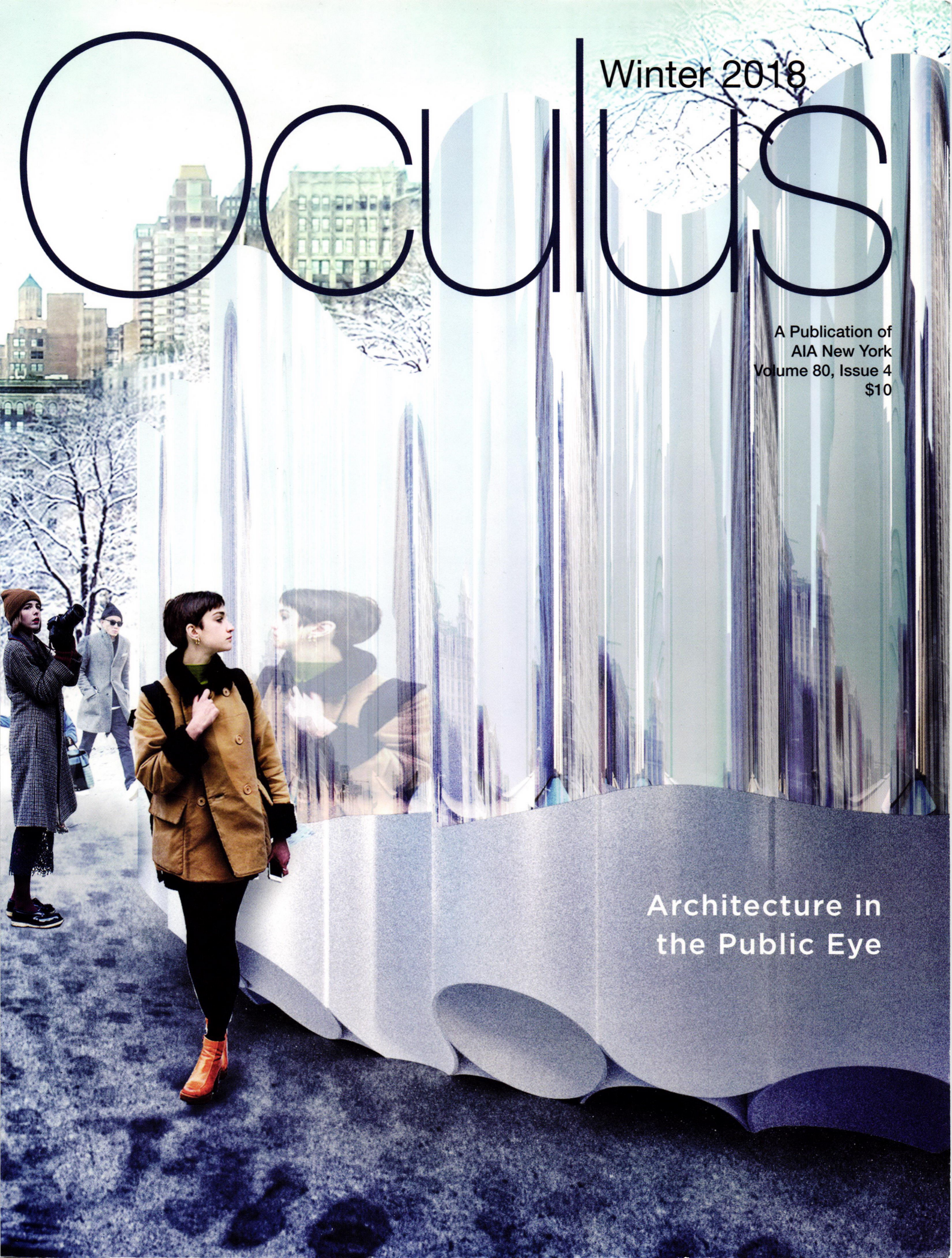


Oculus

Winter 2018

A Publication of
AIA New York
Volume 80, Issue 4
\$10

Architecture in
the Public Eye





THE ARCHITECT'S PROGRAM

at

NASCC THE STEEL CONFERENCE

Baltimore, Maryland || April 11–13, 2018

Wednesday, 4.11.2018

Creative Use of Structural Steel in Tall Buildings of the Future 1.0 LU
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

KEYNOTE: Seeing the Unseen || Dan Goods 1.0 LU
9:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Mitigating Thermal Bridging In Steel Construction 1.0 LU
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Myths and Realities of Sustainable Design 1.0 LU/1.0 CE GBCI
2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Amazon Biospheres: Understanding the Complex Geometry, Analysis, Fabrication and Erection 1.5 LU
3:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

Building with Weathering Steel 1.0 LU
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Total LUs offered: 6.5 LU

1-DAY Fee: \$75

By registering for the 1-Day Program on April 11, you receive COMPLIMENTARY ADMISSION for the entire three-day conference.

Thursday, 4.12.2018

8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Conference Dinner

7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
additional fee required

Friday, 4.13.2018

8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

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Registration code: ARCHITECT

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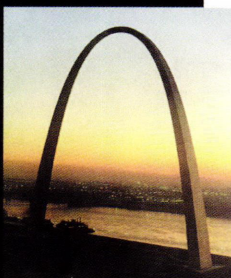
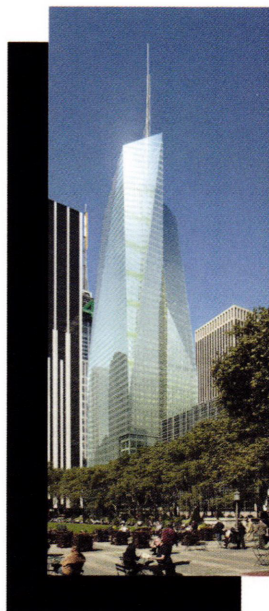
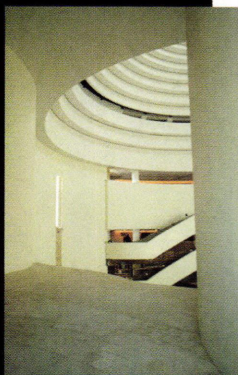


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Architect: Rossetti
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Photograph: Rafael Gamero

Top Seed

Arthur Ashe Stadium at USTA's Billie Jean King National Tennis Center is one of sport's most beloved venues. But its roofless design meant rain often stopped play. To keep tournaments on schedule, the stadium's original designers, architect **Rossetti** and engineer **WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff**, proposed the tennis world's largest long-span retractable roof. With a 7-minute opening time and a design that keeps sightlines unobstructed, the new lightweight fabric and steel canopy is favored to win over athletes and fans alike. Read more about it in **Metals in Construction** online.



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Rendering of Flatiron Reflection, a temporary pavilion in Madison Square designed by Future Expansion. The project was initiated by Van Alen Institute.

Image by

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Obdurate Space: Architecture of Donald Judd

On view through March 5, 2018
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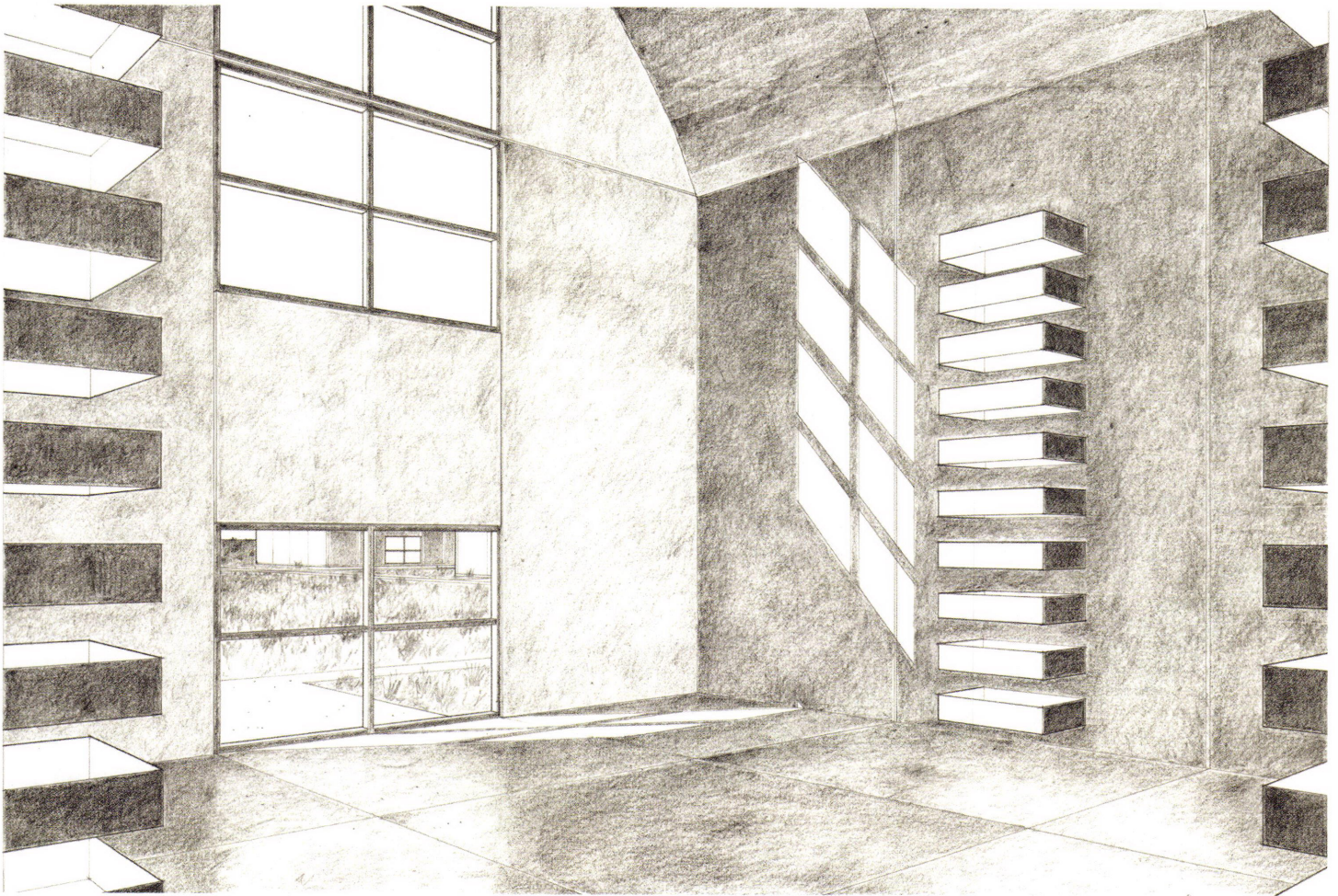


Image Credit: Interior view of 9 meter concrete building. Drawing by Claude Armstrong.

Obdurate Space: *Architecture of Donald Judd* focuses on built and unrealized architectural projects by Judd, one of the most recognized artists of the 20th Century. The exhibition reveals how drawing and building cultures impacted his art and suggests how his work has influenced contemporary architecture.

Related Programs: Monday, March 5th, 6-8 PM Talk: Donald Judd and Architecture

THE CHALLENGES WE SEEK

BY DAVID PISCUSKAS, FAIA, LEED AP

Photo: Center for Architecture



Amidst the evolution of the practice of architecture, one thing is sure: architects are more active than ever before in more aspects of the place-making process. Yet at times we seem stuck in a state of near-permanent anxiety about our social relevance and professional standing.

The evolution of the built environment from the basic provision of shelter for habitation and commerce, to expressions of governmental hegemony and to structures for cultural enlightenment has been recycled many times throughout history. There can be little doubt that architecture – be it large “A” mission or small “a” profession – is squeezed more than ever between the capitalist forces of commoditization and the social tides of commodification.

Consumers of design and architectural services are smarter and more savvy than ever, an evolution brought forward by architects themselves. As for the penetration of commercial values into the artistry of architecture, we’ve always worked in the nexus of art and commerce. That’s not a new phenomenon.

So, accompanied by concerns about a loss of agency or a broken business model, and in a time of

rapid information exchange and virtual experiential consumption, some might wonder, “Whither architecture?” or fear for the “disposability of place.” By contrast, a wise architect and friend recently remarked, “The place is the client.” Today, perhaps more than ever, people everywhere are conveying a connection to buildings, places, and real experiences in ways that are playful, effusive, soulful, imaginative, collective, and personal.

These realities remind us that the reasons for what we do in the practice of building shelter and making places can be found in knowing the people we serve: their thoughts, opinions, aspirations, concerns, desires, and needs. Surrounded as we are by the public – with its expanding capacities for mobility, communication, direct interaction, and personal experience in a myriad of types of places and buildings – our mission and opportunities to serve people and communities don’t shrink: rather, the opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the lives of our fellow citizens expand.

Implicit in our training, and explicit in our delivery, are the characteristics and capabilities of resil-

ency and vision: the ability to forge connections between otherwise oppositional factions, and design these connections into compelling public and personal contributions of space, proportion, light, material, and detail.

We surely have every reason to feel challenged by the disruptive influences of commoditization and commodification. These challenges are invigorating, for they are the essential challenges of modernity, inquiry, progress, and innovation. These are challenges we seek and celebrate.

Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion

On view January 26, 2018 - March 31, 2018
Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Place,
New York, NY 10012



Image Credit: Interboro Partners

The Arsenal of Inclusion and Exclusion: New York Edition presents 156 “weapons” utilized by architects, planners, policymakers, developers, real estate brokers, activists, and other urban actors to restrict or increase access to urban space.

Curated and designed by Interboro Partners.

Related Programs: Friday, January 26, 6-8 PM Opening; Thursday March 1, 6-8 PM Oculus Book Talk: The Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

TOWARD AN ARCHITECTURE FOR EVERYONE

BY ALAN G. BRAKE

Image Credit: Catherine Gavin



The United States is a vast country with a large population, of which architects represent a tiny fraction. It is not surprising, then, that the profession struggles for recognition in the public consciousness, and that architects often fret that their work and their role are poorly understood.

Since I began writing about architecture in the late 1990s, I have witnessed a profound shift in how the public understands and appreciates architecture and urbanism. This was driven, in part, by the Bilbao Effect and the emergence of a cadre of architects who achieved global renown. Parallel to that, a renewed energy has enlivened many American cities, with more people choosing to live in urban centers than they did in previous generations (though the number of people living in the suburbs continues to outpace those in cities).

When we began putting together this issue, *Oculus* committee members urged me to avoid so-called “starchitecture” as a subject. I happily agreed. This issue isn’t about how many architects Joe Public can name. Rather, it examines the notion of publicness as it relates to the profession through a number of lenses: how the AIA is working to increase awareness of the

field; how media and language are shaping architecture; the role architecture centers and organizations play in promoting design and cities; and how architects are enlarging their role in the public realm.

On these many fronts, we see a profession that is interacting with the public in substantial ways, even as it exists in an image-driven media age. Certainly, there is more work to be done, but I’m convinced that the profession’s relationship to the public is evolving in positive ways. Coupled with many diversity initiatives in schools, firms, and professional organizations like the AIA, architecture is poised to serve a broader and more inclusive public. Onward!

Turning the Page

In the past year, I have been proud to produce four issues of this magazine with a refreshed design, introduce new writers and features, and guide the publication under a new publisher. It has been challenging and rewarding, and I have enjoyed getting to know AIA New York from the inside. This will be the last issue of *Oculus* I will be editing, and it is with enormous gratitude that I want to thank Ben Prosky, Assoc. AIA, and David Piscuskas,

FAIA, for the opportunity. I also want to thank all the members of the *Oculus* Committee, and particularly the outgoing committee chair, Barbara Spandorf, AIA, for their support, guidance, and ideas. I am pleased to know that the magazine will be in great hands with my friend and successor, Molly Heintz. I can’t wait to see what she does. We’ll all be reading.

AT THE CENTER

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AIANY Citation of Public Outreach: AIANY
Transportation and Infrastructure Policy Framework



Incoming President Guy Geier introduces this theme for the year:
Architect | Activist

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Director of the Rubin
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2018 AIANY President Guy Geier, FAIA, LEED AP accepts the gavel from 2017 AIANY
President David Piscuskas, FAIA, LEED AP



Student Award, Joseph Ortiz, AIAS, NYIT



Citation for Design Excellence: AIANY Social Science and Research Committee and AIANY Architecture for Education Committee for the Medgar Evers College Collaborative Research



Frederic Schwartz
Community
Development Award:
Design for Aging
Guidelines, NYC
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in Collaboration with
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Honorary Award: Ramon Gilsanz,
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Ben Prosky, Assoc.
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JUSTICE FOR ALL, RECONSTITUTING JUST POTENTIALS

The Civic Leadership Program of the Emerging New York Architects Committee held a panel discussion titled "...And Justice for All, Reconstituting Just Potentials" on November 17, 2017. Participants included Dr. Harold Appel, former NYC Correctional System physician; Lex Steppling, lead national organizer, Just Leadership USA; Dan Gallagher, principal, NADAAA, Justice in Design; and Fernando Martinez, Fulton project director, Osborne Association. Dr. Susan Opatow, professor of sociology at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, served as moderator. This is an edited transcript of their presentations.

Fernando Martinez:

"...And Justice for All, Reconstituting Just Potentials" is inspired by the Civic Leadership Program's mission to foster civic engagement and responsibility, with the goal of cultivating and enduring a culture of advocacy that sows lasting benefits for our profession, communities, and nation.

"Justice" is a term that has risen high in the ranks of our public discourse. Unfortunately, the context of that rise is the lack of it in many of our public institutions. When we speak about the subject of justice, we are reminded of how justice is intertwined with injustice. The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. bring perspective to this complex duality. He once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Our physical surroundings are an integral and formative component of how justice is deployed. With Mayor De Blasio's recent proposal outlining the closure of Rikers Island, New York City is taking momentous steps in redefining justice today.

The proposed policy transformations will have a significant impact on our physical space. Collectively, we have an opportunity to define the process for the future physical manifestation of justice, who it is for, what it will look like, and how it works. This will ensure that the outcome represents the greatest good for all, especially the communities and populations most affected.

Dr. Harold Appel

I'm here to provide a context for the situation in the jail system of the city. Of course, I was there for a long time. I've spent a lot of time "behind bars," you could say.

The first thing I want to mention is there's a really big misconception about the difference between a prison and a jail. Our system is mostly a jail, and that means it's made up of at least 80% to 85% of people who are detainees. They've been arrested, and the



Photo credit: Center for Architecture

main thing that makes them different from us is they're supposed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Something wrong is that they can't make bail: they don't have enough money, and everybody knows if your bail is \$10 and your pocket is empty, it could be a million dollars.

If there's one message I give you tonight it's that locking people up because they don't have enough money is just a horrendous thing, and it's been going on for so long in our city, and it needs to end.

Back in January of 1974, I was six months out of my residency program and drifting around for something meaningful to do. A classmate in medical school was moonlighting at the old Tombs [the Manhattan Detention Complex], and asked me if I was interested. "Yeah," I said. "I'll try that." I started working there and realized I could really accomplish something. The inmates, if they wanted to see a specialist, would wait for months to get sent to the city hospital, and they often would never get there, either. It would get better or worse and worse, and then they had to be taken to the emergency room.

I started going to the Bronx House of Detention. You could see Yankee Stadium from the screened-in roof, where people got to exercise. There was a Brooklyn House of Detention, a Queens House of Detention, and this other place, a branch in Queens. Someone had noticed there were about 20 suicides a year in the system, and they said, "Let's put all the suicidal people in one spot and give them extra treatment." When I was there, there were nets stretched between those walls so people couldn't jump off and kill themselves. I don't think that's what cut down their suicides, though; I think it was that people there cared. I remember the warden was a really good person, and he set the tone for that facility and they reduced the number of suicides, amazingly.

You see a pattern of things coming back to the way they were. There were the borough houses, people started going centralized, and Rikers Island, where they won't escape so

easily. One idea now is to return to boroughs, to the neighborhoods where their families are, where their jobs are, where they live, where their friends are – stuff they're going to lose when they're locked up.

The main thing I want to convey is that all the people I got to meet – about 25,000 to 30,000 people – opened their hearts to me a lot of the time because I realized if I treated them halfway human, it came back. It was a rewarding thing that happened. I felt like I was accomplishing something in that work.

Lex Stepling

Just Leadership USA is both a leadership development and an advocacy organization. We have our roots here in New York City, but are in the process of building out nationally. Our Founder and President Glenn E. Martin, who himself was formerly incarcerated, realized that many of us who have in one form or another dealt with the justice system – via incarceration or having been family members – when we arrived in advocacy spaces, there's often an exceptionalizing of the experience.

To arrive in any space where one is okay means that one had opportunities and came in contact with channels of access that aren't usually granted to folks who dealt with these experiences. Our leadership development program exists for that very reason: to create that channel where there was none, and to make sure that the ton of brilliant, dynamic, compassionate, skilled people who would otherwise be denied opportunity because of the endemic impacts of the justice system are going to have that access.

Many of you know Just Leadership USA because of our work on the Close Rikers Campaign. Rikers Island is one of many facilities across the country that probably for generations was seen as a normal part of civic life, almost like the post office or county jail. The truth is, these are places where sanctioned torture has happened for longer than any of us in this room have been alive. It is torture; there's no gray area.

To have an abolitionist lens is often seen as something vacuous that we just say, "Oh, we don't want it to exist," but it's instead trying to transform the whole dialogue around this issue. The fact that it has existed for so long and we've been forced for so long to be reformist or incrementalist around it has validated something that shouldn't have been validated.

The shift away from that I think is fundamental – not to be seen as the ones who hold the radical line, but to hold the line because we want to normalize the fact that a place like Rikers Island should not exist, nor should Men's Central Jail in LA County, the Workhouse in Saint Louis, or Cook County Jail in Chicago. I could spend the rest of the evening naming one facility after another in this country where thousands of people are being tortured.

A lot of the excitement about the Close Rikers Campaign is that for the first time ever, a mayor said, "Yeah, we're going to close the jail," and then he said we'll do it in 10 years, which

is frankly absurd. We don't know what's going to happen in 10 years. That said, it is a huge step forward because we've reimagined something. What was once seen as a radical left idea is now almost seen as a normal call for change. The idea that a local municipal or county jail shouldn't exist in a pretty short time went from something that felt very far-reaching and very radical to something we now expect and demand to have happen sooner.

The other thing I think is important is, we talk about how the impact of the jail spills back out in the communities because whenever we have this conversation there's always the idea that, well, what about all those people who commit those crimes? What about the dangerous ones and the kind of dangerous/non-dangerous binary, which is not a static thing? Don't forget that not too long ago, Rikers Island had 25,000 people. Now it has between 8,000 and 9,000 people. It's already been massive decarceration, and crime has not gone up. What happened was, people got to go back home and be members of their communities.

It's about people going home, and then when we think about the victim/offender binary, the victim/offender binary exists in the same person, the same neighborhood, and the same community. The most people who've been affected by violent crime have also been affected by state violence.

I was excited to learn that the AIA has a code of ethics. That code now feels more relevant than ever, because the veneer of how we imagine the system was supposed to work has really, I think, been stripped recently. I think everybody's going through a cathartic moment where they're looking at the system as it was actually designed, and feeling the acute ugliness of it.

Dan Gallagher

We were involved in a project called Justice for Design. We're a partner design firm that has done work on a multiplicity of building types, programs, and locations all over the world at all different types, except jails and places of detention.

As you've heard, there is a very clear difference between a jail and a prison. A jail is most often a place where people are held for short sentences of less than a year. For example, Rikers Island has 8,000 or 9,000 people, and about 80% of them or more have never been convicted of a crime.

Having never worked in this type of building or project, we came to it with an extraordinarily kind of humility, and I think we were asked to join with open ears, open eyes, and open minds to consider what could be next.

Jails and detentions are one part of the criminal industrial complex or system that also includes the court system, the police departments, and us as citizens. All these pieces need to work more effectively to understand how this part of society, this part of the civic experience, can be better not just for those who are there, but for all of us.

We were working for the Independent Commission for the New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform. As we started our design work, there was also a lot of other work

going on about what you do with the island and the people. How does this thing work? Why is it so bad? Our piece was a small component of a much broader study. Rikers is nine jails and what historically has been 25,000 people, to now what is 8,000 to 9,000 people. It is a city in and of itself, with a culture and a condition that is abhorrent.

Our mandate was to produce a set of programs and design principles for future jails and detention centers in the City of New York. We were not asked to design a building, but to understand how design could be an active and integral part of any discussions as this process moves forward.

We went through a series of conversations about the pros and cons of various pieces of the puzzle. How do you define your community? How do you define your context? What are the good things? What are the bad things? What are your perceptions and expectations of jails and the incarceration systems in New York? And maybe most important, what happens afterwards? Not only what is the next jail supposed to look like, but what happens after someone experiences this part of life? What happens with them next? How do we engage them back into a broader civic life?

What we've found in our three workshops, Queens, Bronx, and Brooklyn – we also toured one of the facilities at Rikers, Rosie, the newest and maybe the most “pretty” of the various jails – is that every borough has people coming to Rikers. You are detained or arrested in any one of the boroughs, you don't make bail or for some other reason, most of the people end up at Rikers.

For us, it became a three-pronged approach. One was, how do we describe interior design principles that could potentially affect current conditions in the short run, and what comes next in the long run? One was the detainee, the life of the detainee himself or herself, and, in a way, making a space. Again, these are incredibly basic ideas of light, air, acoustic attenuation, program adjacencies, access to outdoors. This doesn't mean you have to wait on an elevator with 14 other people for 45 minutes to get to an outdoor space, but how can you make normalcy a reality for those folks living there for however long they'll be.

In this case, we also know we live in a sectional world, in a city, so these things need to happen not just in this Virgilian landscape of the horizontality, but vertically as well. At the same time, we know full well that the place involves a culture of corrections, and that is actually is a major problem with the day-to-day operations of Rikers and other jails and detainee centers. How can we make spaces to improve conditions for the correction officers and the staff? Again, simple ideas: light, air, space, acoustic attenuation, access to outdoors.

The third of the three prongs is visitor experience. Again, if you think of who actually brings the experience of detention home on a daily basis, it's the visitors and folks who work there. How can we make that visitor experience much better than it is right now? It is just horrific that the system is not digital, so you may not know where your loved one is at that particular moment. You can spend an entire day trying to get both to and on

Rikers Island. You go through multiple tests and metal detectors for a 30- to 45-minute visit with your loved one or client. You've spent an entire day trying to get to that point of interaction in a place which is crap where there is no sense of normalcy in the way people interact.

What happens after we close Rikers? We're looking at places that are not necessarily about a jail or detention, but about a civic building. How do we make civic buildings, knowing that a civic building is not just about the people who work inside, but about everyone around it who has to understand it as a part of their neighborhood and community? It's not the big buildings that have no windows and look like they're just covered in barbed wire – how do you make a place that has a community understanding that is actually positive?

We looked at various narratives of people, not just the folks who work there but the people who live, work, and walk their dog in the neighborhood. How can we describe programs we found through the workshops that actually engage not only the folks within the detention facility, but those around it or those affected by it on a daily basis? Some of this is based on what we learn in terms of nursing homes, new businesses, release services, community spaces, tutoring services, bus stops, officer training, jury duty – if you think about the city and how we overlap and how these individuals work in the city, there are points where we all do the same thing. We may do it differently and at different times a day, but there may be places we can do that within a building that has a primary component that's actually a point of detention.

We went through a day in the life of a detainee, community members, corrections officers: how they work, the location relative to courts. Why can't there be a gym near where they work? Why can't there be a restaurant? Again, it becomes part of a daily routine. Business owners, families, daycare: simple things that again may not necessarily have to exist within the building, but within the context by which we make these buildings.

For the released detainee, the first day someone is detained should really be about what happens after they are released. How can release be understood as a part of the process that one begins with, whether it's finding housing, helping one establish where they go, and the next step? Where is the probation officer? Where is job training? Legal services? Can they exist within these communities? How do they all work together in terms of making this place we call a city or a civic life?

This is just understanding the porosity of the building itself. It's not just that edifice over there with the barbed wire around it, but a place that can actually be made more engaging for the rest of us, whether it's the DMV or a community room. All of this has the potential of making an integral part of who we are as a city.

Again, the imperative for change and the negative effects of our current system are extremely broad. They are generational and affect people of color and those with economic challenges in horribly disproportionate ways. We can do better.

Fernando Martinez

The Osborne Association was founded over 85 years ago by Thomas Mott Osborne, an industrialist and former mayor of Auburn, New York. He was also a warden at one of the state correctional facilities, but before he became a warden he wanted to get a firsthand experience of what it was like to be incarcerated within the prison. He went in under an alias. It was groundbreaking experience, and ever since then, he and his family have been dedicated to criminal justice reform. The Osborne Association today is located within over 20 upstate correctional facilities. We have main offices in the Bronx, and offices in Brooklyn, Newburgh, and Harlem. We're also within Rikers.

This is a rendering of the Fulton Community Reentry Center. The facility wasn't always a correctional facility; it was actually constructed in 1906 as the Bronx House of Worship by the Episcopal diocese. It remained a house of worship for a number of years, but as the neighborhood changed so did the use of the facility.

After it was a synagogue, it became a YMHA and then a nursing home in the '50s. Somewhere in the '50s and '60s it changed ownership from a private owner to the State of New York. As the drug epidemic became intense in the city, the state took over this facility and made it a drug treatment facility. From that, it evolved in the '70s to a work release facility, which housed 400 to 500 men before it was closed in 2011. It was first constructed as a five-story building, but when the state took it over they infilled some of the very tall floors and created a seven-story building. That posed a bunch of challenges for us when we took it over because it's overbuilt, but we got past all that.

We also spent time doing community engagement. The people within the Bronx community, in Community Board 3, were very familiar with the facility as a correctional facility, and they wanted to see what would happen to it. We did a yearlong community engagement process and asset mapping with the community. About half of those people who attended were formerly incarcerated, either on parole or probation, or had some type of contact with the criminal justice system. We also had policymakers, community-based organizations, and elected officials represented.

Let me touch on some statistics. I look at these numbers, and it still blows me away in terms of what we face with people reentering the community. In 2012 there were over 22,000 people released within New York State. Of that, 10,000 people a year were released to New York City. There are cities in this country that are smaller than that. Ten thousand people released every year come to New York City, and so what happens to them?

How does someone succeed upon being released, coming back into the community if they don't have the resources to make them succeed? One thing we want to do at Fulton is provide services so those released can come back and have the tools necessary to have success in gaining employment, some

education, and a place to live, as opposed to going back to a correctional facility, which happens more than we'd like.

We're going to provide residential housing at Fulton transitional housing. We're working with the New York City Department of Homeless Services to provide funding so we can cover the cost to operate this facility. What we found is of those 10,000 people released every year, 10% to 20% are homeless. They go to the shelter system without any resources or benefits, and they're just lost.

We want to provide a diversion so they will not go to the shelter but come to Fulton to be part of the discharge plan before they're released. We want to identify those who are going to be homeless, and then send them straight to Fulton so they receive the necessary services and work collaboratively with neighborhood organizations or institutions where there's a healthcare facility and a mental institution to provide the resources people need. It will be residential floors: four floors, 135 beds, dormitory-style.

It's very important to have natural light in the rooms because that improves the psychological and social well-being of the person. It was very important that we have the sleeping accommodations on the perimeter of the building, and that every room has access to a window without bars.

Susan Opatow

I'm a researcher on social justice and injustice from a social psychological perspective.

Procedural justice and distributive justice are interrelated in the circular fashion, where procedures lead to outcomes, and then outcomes return back to procedures. My work is in a third aspect of justice, which is a justice of inclusion and exclusion. My work as opposed to procedural and distributive justice, which attends to how and what, attends to the question of who – particularly, who counts. In the criminal justice, we see a system. We see exclusion writ large. If you have institutions that are detaining people who are innocent, if you have institutions that are so racially skewed, there's a problem in society.

I deeply believe our society is best judged by how we treat those who are least advantaged. My work on inclusion and exclusion is relevant in the context of stakeholder involvement.

Then there's the issue of the precarious communities, the communities that may in the future become jail-involved if we're not attentive to larger issues about social justice in general. These are important issues about the distribution of resources in society. We have decades of disinvestment in minority communities of discrimination throughout society. There's a legacy of housing segregation throughout the country that goes back to the 1930s.

I think we're at a very important juncture right now. In this room I see faces I am sure are going to be part of any solution. I urge you to become active in this, because it reflects so much on the society in which we live.

IMAGINING A FRAMEWORK FOR ARCHITECTURAL ENGAGEMENT

BY BENJAMIN PROSKY, ASSOC. AIA

Architecture is a public commodity. While there is no broad public understanding of what an architect does or how the public can engage in a meaningful discussion about architecture, the public – everyone from design professionals to elementary school students – is generally intrigued by architecture and wants to understand how buildings come to be.

Architecture is all around us. It can greatly enhance our lives, but it can also create barriers and constraints. For these reasons, I believe everyone is entitled to an opinion about architecture. With this broad range of opinions in mind, AIA New York and the Center for Architecture are working diligently to engage diverse audiences in discussions about architecture and the city. To focus this work, we initiated a strategic planning process over the past year to help serve the needs of our AIA members and design community, as well as the general public. A Steering Committee composed of AIANY and Center board members and staff was assembled to oversee this process. We agreed on the premise that, though each organization must have specific goals and respond to a range of constituencies, we have a far greater impact when these groups work together closely and collaboratively.

The planning process allowed us to articulate the nature of that collaborative and invaluable relationship between the two organizations: The Center's educational initiatives and programming are strengthened

Photo credit: Samuel Lahoz



A bamboo structure-raising as a part of "Scaffolding: A Framework for Social Engagement," October 7, 2017.

because of AIANY's direct engagement with architectural professionals, while AIANY benefits from the Center's role as a platform through which to engage and convene the public.

While the full strategic framework includes many exciting tactical plans and objectives, its essence is expressed in the following high-level strategic goals:

- Together, AIANY and the Center will work to advocate for a more engaging and responsible environment for all who create and experience architecture.
- The Center will become the most compelling, relevant, and open

place to learn about architecture and urbanism in New York City.

- AIANY will cultivate a New York architectural community that is adept, influential, and just, empowering its members to work at the apex of their abilities.

Over the coming years, I look forward to working with many members and engaging new audiences as we focus our activities to make our two organizations – and, by extension, architects and architecture – increasingly relevant and impactful in New York City and beyond.



OPENER

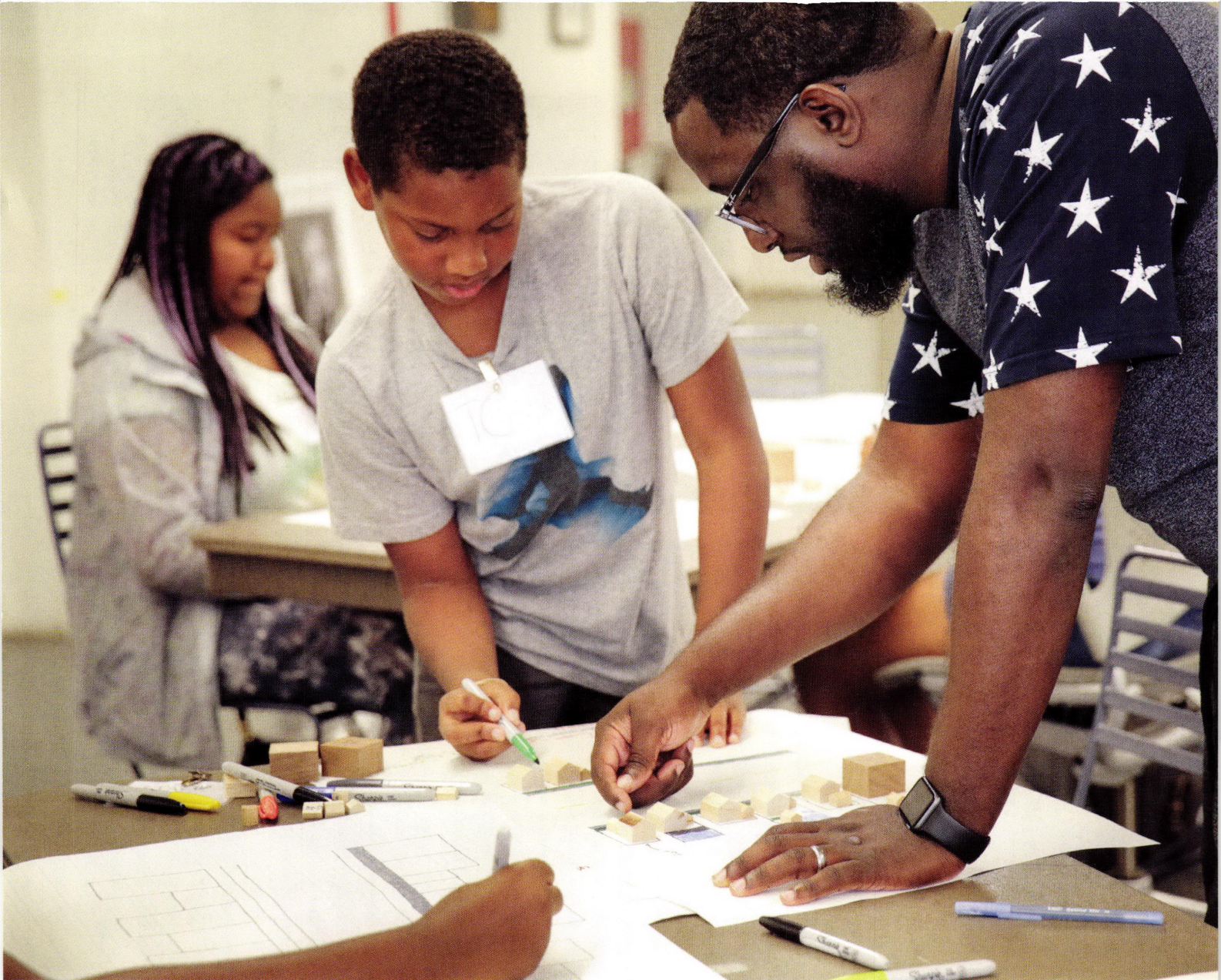
ARCHITECTURE IN THE PUBLIC EYE

Architecture is between “isms,” or perhaps the age of “isms” has passed. As a profession, architecture seems caught between two imperatives: to play to an Instagram-obsessed public through inventive form- or image-making; or to engage with the public in deeper, more accessible ways that confront the everyday challenges and demands

with responsive and responsible design. While these imperatives often seem in conflict, this issue of *Oculus* shows how accessibility and engagement are often intertwined, and that assertive imagery and earnest intention can coexist and even be mutually reinforcing.

The photo collage on this page represents a small sampling of selfies

taken at the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial, an event that asked practicing architects as well as academics and theorists to engage with the history of architecture to suggest possible new futures. An esoteric task to be sure, so why not add a little levity – and a hashtag – to draw people in?



FEATURE

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Are architecture organizations engaging broad communities – or preaching to the converted?

BY ANNA FIXSEN

During a sweltering week in Atlanta last July, a few dozen middle schoolers gathered in a classroom at Georgia Tech's architecture school. Like a real-life design studio, the kids sat behind rows of black desktop computers, 3D models morphing on their monitors. But

the similarities ended there: on the computer screens, calls-to-action for Atlanta rappers like Lil Yachty, Gucci Mane, and Future hovered above renderings of buildings. A turntable conspicuously occupied the front of the room.



Photo credit: courtesy Michael Ford

Students at Hip Hop Architecture Camp, a week-long workshop dedicated to exposing the profession of architecture to underrepresented communities.

These kids were part of the Hip Hop Architecture Camp, a week-long workshop dedicated to teaching underrepresented youth – particularly black and Latino kids – about design and urban planning. The program grew out of the Detroit-based Urban Arts Collective, co-founded by architect Michael Ford after noticing at various professional events that “not a lot of people looked like us.” Hip-hop could be a medium to get teenagers “to evaluate and say what they want,” Ford says. “If you want to make something different, we have to do something totally different.”

Hip Hop Architecture is achieving what hundreds of architecture programs across the United States both claim and aspire to accomplish: engage and inspire those outside the scope of the profession. Although collectively these organizations have a net impact on millions of individuals each year, architecture faces a number of existential challenges; chief among them are a lack of diversity, aging membership bases, and a general lack of public awareness.

Professional organizations and non-profits are scrambling to address these issues. The American Institute of Architects, for instance, has launched an “Equity in Architecture” commission, hired a director of K–12 initiatives, and, as part of a broader public awareness campaign, broadcast TV advertisements. In recent years, a wave of biennials, design weeks, and architecture festivals has swept the country. Yet, despite all these efforts, many architecture organizations are still hard-pressed to reach audiences outside the immediate design community.

This question is a top concern of Michael Wood, the executive director of the Association of Architecture Organization (AAO). Last year, AAO sent a poll to its 170-member non-profits (which include professional associations like the AIA, as well as major cultural institutions such as the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum) to assess their public impact. The study found that 29% of these organizations’ overall following consists of architecture and design professionals. At the outset, such a statistic doesn’t seem to be cause for alarm

ALASKA
DESIGN
FORUM

OCTOBER 4-5 NOV. 6-7 JUN.
LINCOLN SCHATZ / NEW MEDIA ARTIST / CHICAGO
Lincoln Schatz is a contemporary American artist, best known for works that utilize video to collect, store, and display images from specific environments. His work engages chance as a means of breaking habitual modes of thought. Software and interaction (Google) are the determinants in this process. He established his artistic practice in 2000, when he made the transition from sculpture objects to generative video work. Schatz creates "generative portraits" of people and places, video images captured by digital cameras, stored on hard drives, and randomly recomposed over time in overlapping layers. The resulting works can be read in many ways—as abstractions, as narratives, or as borrowed memories of moments in time. He is interested in ways to create generative systems that utilize chance to produce variable outcomes. Long central to his work was the desire to merge artistic practice with the everyday experience of life, replete with its compelling ebb and flow of information. www.lincolnschatz.com

NOVEMBER 8-9 NOV. 9-10 JUN.
JAMES VICTORE / GRAPHIC DESIGNER / NEW YORK
James Victore is an independent artist and designer. His clients include Nike & Champion, Apple, Apple, Volvo, Yamaha, Yamaha, The New York Times and the School of Visual Arts. His awards include an Emmy for television animation, a gold medal from the International Designers Association and the Grand Prix from the Brits Biennale. His designs can be seen in the permanent collections of the Louvre and The Library of Congress. He teaches graphic design as the School of Visual Arts in New York City and is a founder of the annual Store, Village, Mirror, Empire: Design Workshop www.jamesvictore.com

JANUARY 26-28 NOV. 25-27 JUN.
FAYTHE LEVINE / ARTIST - AUTHOR / MILWAUKEE
Faythe Levine is an author, director, boutique owner and crafts artist who lives & works in Milwaukee, WI. Her film handmade Nation documents the rise of the new DIY craft movement, making a case for "thick craft" and re-imagining our roles as both consumers and producers. Levine is currently working on a documentary about American sign makers—those who were and still are making the streets and signs that help us get a message across, and whose work we see daily on highways, storefronts, playgrounds and farmers markets. faythelevine.blogspot.com

FEBRUARY 28-30 MARCH 1-3 MARCH 2-4 JUN.
STETHAL / ENGINEER / BATH, UK
Alec Stethal and Marc Heister founded the collective STETHAL in 2005. The practice is based in Bath, England and Stethal has established and participated in a number of projects on the complexity and uncertainty of the contemporary city. Their firm has developed software to model the messy metabolism of modern European cities. Alec and Marc are members of both the Centre for Future Cities and the School of Moving Studies, an interdisciplinary network that engages in the examination of cities in transition. www.stethal.net

MARCH 14-16 NOV. 15-17 JUN.
JÜRGEN MAYER / ARCHITECT / BERLIN
Jürgen Mayer is founder and principal of an apogamous cross-disciplinary studio located in Berlin. He studied at Stuttgart University, The Cooper Union and at Princeton University. His work has been published and exhibited worldwide and is included in such international collections as MoMA New York and GEMMA. His work has won numerous prizes, such as the Max-van-der-Stapel-Award 2003 Emerging Architect and Winner Future Awards 2005. Jürgen Mayer has taught at Princeton University, University of the Arts Berlin, Harvard University, the Architectural Association in London and is currently teaching at Columbia University in New York. www.juergenmayer.de

COMMON SPACE SYMPOSIUM + DESIGN CHALLENGE

A series of design challenges in rural and urban communities throughout Alaska that brings artists, architects and designers from around the globe together with artists, architects, designers and other community members in Alaska to explore the ideas of common space through a spontaneous and collaborative exploration/project. In addition, an exhibition, in partnership with the International Gallery of Contemporary Art, that will explore uncommon ideas for common spaces within the gallery's "white box" and outside it: walls into Anchorage's common spaces.

– if you go to a dental convention, you will most likely be interacting with dentists, Wood points out. But member organizations also self-reported that, in addition to architects and designers, their primary following, out of a collective audience of 4.5 million people, are those who intentionally seek out architecture and design programming

– in other words, the converted. The AAO poll also revealed that nearly half its members' audiences are 36 years of age or older, "so you are truly reaching mid-career and later-career architects," says Wood, not children or young professionals.

An aging audience is a reality confronted by Michelle Hayworth, the director of the Alaska Design

The Alaska Design Forum is working to attract a younger audience with eye-catching graphics and creative programming.

Image credit: Courtesy Alaska Design Forum

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Rendering of the proposed Architecture Center Houston

Forum, an AAO member. The population her organization serves, split between Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks, has a rapidly growing number of seniors and retirees, a rate that outpaces that of the contiguous U.S. “We have an aging audience, so as a matter of necessity we are trying hard to bring in the next generation,” says Hayworth. To address this, the Design Forum is in the early stages of developing programming catered to K–12 students. But in the short term, she says, “it’s definitely a challenge to keep our programming relevant to everyone.”

Indeed, the type and frequency of programs are large predictors of the participants the architecture organizations attract. There is also a Catch-22 for architecture groups that want to implement boundary-pushing experimental programming, but still manage to keep the lights won. In Wood’s experience, many non-profits will judge their success by the frequency of the programs alone. “They are trying to keep the place active, but then you don’t have time to cultivate a preferred audience,” he says. “There is an upshot to having a lot of programs, but you are going to preach to the choir a lot.”

Rusty Bienvenue, the executive director of the AIA’s Houston Chapter, concedes this is

a challenge facing his organization as well. While a packed room during a lecture or exhibition opening would seem to be a measure of success, it’s not necessarily indicative of “spreading the gospel.” Says Bienvenue, “Every museum has its Impressionist exhibit that brings out the old ladies because they like that sort of thing. “There is probably an architecture equivalent that brings out all the architecture aficionados, and that’s fine, but when I look around and see people I’ve never seen before, that’s the measure of success for me.”

Both large and small architecture entities can employ a number of strategies to draw in new and more diverse groups, says Wood. Large, member-based associations such as the AIA have the benefit of pooling and sharing resources and can thereby “support good work, and hold good ideas to the light,” Wood says. Still, he observes that smaller organizations that tightly tailor their programming to a specific issue or community tend to attract younger and more diverse followings.

The preponderance of these smaller groups across the U.S. hints at a vast potential to expand architecture’s outreach. Sixty percent of AAO members are small, with revenues of less than \$100,000 annually. More than a third of the organizations are young, with less than 20 years under



their belts. But, though smaller organizations can have more targeted missions, many struggle to scale up and compete with more established and better-resourced architecture organizations, not to mention a plethora of other more familiar cultural institutions, such as art museums.

To address these challenges, says Wood, both large and small-scale organizations need to leverage what he calls “the design school ethic” and come up with more focused, strategic roadmaps for the future. “We love action, we love working, and we think if we are working late nights, we are doing great work,” he says. But “some things that are in our DNA as an architecture center community have to be channeled into more of a plan.”

Michael Ford of Hip Hop Architecture is continuing to forge ahead. Next year he hopes to organize some 30 camps around the country. Additionally, the Urban Art Center, in honor of the licensure of the 400th-ever black woman architect this year, is launching an initiative to



get the next 400 African-American women architects licensed. Approaches like these, he says, will ultimately alter the course of the profession.

“I think the profession as a whole has a system that ‘works,’” says Ford. “It works because it’s ‘proven.’ It passively attracts the same individuals, and people in the profession have become complacent with it. To change it, we have to operate entirely out that system.”

Anna Fixsen is the senior web editor at Metropolis.

The nearly complete Architecture Center Houston was badly damaged by floodwaters from Hurricane Harvey



Photo credit: AIA/Keith Isaacs

FEATURE

ESCAPE FROM THE CAPE

AIA National is working to clarify the profession's public image, replacing lingering myths with more realistic, constructive messages. But are these efforts having the necessary impact?

BY BILL MILLARD

Will the U.S. populace ever be able to see architects directly without filtering their image through an outmoded but persistent stereotype: that they wear Corb glasses and capes, speak exclusively in impenetrable jargon, and value their personal aesthetics over clients' interests and societal needs? The architectural profession and its media caricature are far apart, yet this most public of art forms retains a degree of mystery in the public eye. The American Institute of Architects's national

office believes that studying how citizens perceive architecture, then intervening through targeted communications, is constructive for both the public and the profession.

The AIA's "repositioning initiative" began in 2012, engaging brand consultants Pentagram and marketing firm LaPlaca Cohen to interview members, officials, clients, and public representatives, followed by nationwide public polls by Slover Linett Strategies. AIA President Robert Ivy,

FAIA, summarizes the findings succinctly: “People admire architects, but they cannot appreciate them to the full extent because they do not understand what they do.”

Detailed polling results indicated that comprehension of architectural work correlated with higher educational levels; that the likelihood of seeking an architect’s services correlated with higher income (though this was not the only factor explaining why college graduates are more likely to work with architects); that respondents who had worked with an architect were generally satisfied with the experience; that perceptions of cost and difficulty clashed with positive beliefs that architects provided essential services; and that perceptions about architects were generally higher than AIA members expected them to be. As far as surveys can measure an entity as complex as public perception, the studies offer encouragement intermingled with challenges for the field’s leaders.

Concern over disconnection from the mainstream is not breaking news, but a familiar refrain. Rafael Viñoly, FAIA, addressing the World Architecture Festival in Berlin last November, challenged the profession to combat marginalization on multiple fronts: “the decline of the scope of the discipline, our crisis in education, the bastardization of architectural criticism, and, above all, the absolutely amazing imbalance between supply and

demand.” Viñoly cited a disturbing financial metric: of an \$8.8 trillion output in global construction in 2016, architecture accounted for only \$264 billion, “less than 2% of what constitutes the built environment,” he said.

This proportion “has always been numerically low,” Ivy acknowledges, skewed in the U.S. by the prominence of residential construction and “small and marginal buildings that can get an engineer stamp.” The AIA’s goal is to alert decision-makers about the range of architectural options, Ivy says, from the specialized niche occupied by Viñoly and his peers to “a broad number of architects, some of whom are community advocates; some of whom are client representatives; and some of whom design more pragmatic types of facilities that help people get well, foster better communication, or allow people to study in a way that fosters learning.” Models like Samuel Mockbee’s Rural Studio in Hale County, Ala., Ivy suggests, can inspire ordinary citizens’ thinking about the difference design makes in their lives.

The AIA aims to heighten public understanding, not only to promote architects’ business interests – raising the proportion of projects employing architects rather than contractors alone, or boosting recruitment into the field – but to concretize the conviction that broader architectural awareness is healthy for citizens and communities. This is increasingly important as

Duvall Decker Architects in Jackson, Mississippi works with under-served communities and are adept at communicating the real-world impacts of design.



Photo credit: AIA/Keith Isaacs

climate change raises the stakes for built environments nationwide. “Architects have been at the forefront of thinking about how a country can respond to natural conditions,” Ivy says. “Architects of the United States studying Holland and other places, including New Orleans, have come up with unique solutions.” Tensions between some of those solutions and local practices, as with the Make It Right project after Katrina, underscore the need for clearer multidirectional communications among architects and laypersons.

“The people we serve, the communities we work with, the towns and cities where we work, and our clients themselves have a fundamental desire to know more about architects,” Ivy observes. “They don’t know enough, so how can they appropriately value us? Architects have told us that what they sought was value and relevance. They felt they were being undervalued and were not playing as integral a role as they could in contemporary affairs.”

Forward in all directions

The AIA has answered the survey findings with a three-year staged multimedia campaign. Beginning in 2014, television advertising on the theme “I Look Up” (beginning on the CBS and NBC Sunday-morning news shows) promoted basic awareness of the built environment. The objective was “for the person who walks down the sidewalk with a cell phone to literally look up onto the street,” Ivy says, “and see that that place was created by someone other than themselves.” The annual I Look Up Film Challenge, launched the next year, extended that engagement to the cinema community, with a People’s Choice Award program attracting increasing participation, from 700 votes cast online in 2015 to over 268,000 in 2017.

The second-year ad campaign presented personalized images of clients interacting with buildings on smaller scales, and 2017’s “Blueprint for Better” theme strives to “influence the influencers,” in Ivy’s words, targeting decision-makers whose contact with architects can have social impact. He points to the work of Anne Marie Duvall Decker, FAIA, and Roy Decker, AIA, of Duvall Decker Architects in Jackson, Miss., designing dignified new residences for longtime inhabitants of the impoverished Midtown neighborhood as an exemplary case of revitalization without gentrification. “The impact of architecture on people is what seems to resonate,” says Kathy Compton, AIA’s senior vice president for brand and engage-

ment. “The more we can talk – not so much about the buildings and the beauty and design, but on the impact they have on people – makes all the difference in the world.”

Further components of the initiative bring AIA information to major social-media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram) and to the national newspaper USA Today, which has run 14 city or state “25 must-see buildings” lists developed by local chapters. The AIA also tracks “earned media” (the marketing term of art describing publicity gained outside of paid advertising or owned branding) and presents selected coverage online. Pentagram helped the AIA redesign its web presence, including a new public site, Topic A, which addresses common questions such as why to hire a residential architect, how architects can make schools or workplaces safer, and what phases constitute the design process.

Architects often lament that television overlooks them: in contrast to medicine, law, and other professions, there are no American network series about architecture and very few architect-characters, but mainly background figures. (In the case of “Art Vandelay,” George

Stills from the I Look Up Film Challenge, which now attracts hundreds of thousands of votes in its awards program.





Costanza's bogus alias on *Seinfeld* was a fiction within the fiction.) "One of their chief concerns was HGTV, which seems to produce a house in a box," Ivy adds. "Well, we changed the formula. We're co-sponsoring the Dream Home segment of HGTV's *Urban Oasis* show," reaching over 50 million people who enter a contest. "We insisted that a licensed architect, one of whom was an AIA member, be engaged in this process." As a result, Sara Martin, AIA, from Knoxville, Tennessee, and her husband, Sean Martin, partner at Open Door Architecture, redid a Craftsman bungalow. The network's coverage, says Ivy, "got tremendous uptake by ordinary folk who saw what an architect can do. That's a lesson about architecture without beating someone over the head about it."

Mediated memes

Ivy critiques the "public shibboleth that architects are the reincarnation of Frank Lloyd Wright, every one of whom is concerned with a higher aesthetic ideal and only produces works that are idiosyncratic or have limited utility," as well as "the mistaken belief that all architects are untouchable

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great designers” who work individually. This, he says, is “another misperception that follows the cult of genius of the 19th century.” Despite Emersonian or Nietzschean theories about great men, he continues, “architects don’t work alone!” No practicing architect believes they do, yet the myth is hard to eradicate.

When 2015 AIA NY President Tomas Rossant, AIA, opened several events with a memorable graphic – the book cover of *The Fountainhead* under a red circle and slash, the international prohibition sign – audiences at the Center for Architecture intuitively grasped what was being rejected. Still, images of architects as irresponsible geniuses (fictional and real) remain rife. Actual cape-wearer Wright may have been the living archetype, but theater had anticipated him: Ibsen’s *The Master Builder* established the hubristic, delusional character of Halvard Solness in 1892, when Wright was a 25-year-old Adler and Sullivan employee bootlegging proto-Prairie House designs on the sly. The meme recurs as recently as Ben Wheatley’s cinematic class-war parable *High-Rise* (2016, based on J.G. Ballard’s 1975 novel), with Jeremy Irons as aristocratic, white-clad Anthony Royal, perhaps the heaviest-handed symbol of the Godlike Architect (and his dystopian, doomed creation) yet to hit the screen.

The cure for destructive mediation may be better mediation. Kyle Bergman, AIA, founder and director of the multicity Architecture and Design Film Festival, considering the ways film can both reflect and shape public views, observes that what he calls “societal design IQ” varies between places and periods. “Our society has a higher design IQ now than 25 years ago,” he says, and “the general population knows a lot more about architecture and design than we give them credit for – than they give themselves credit for. I think it’s our job as architects and designers to tease that knowledge out of them and get past that superficial, quick-glance ‘I like it/I don’t like it’ response, and get into how design works.” This is part of the nine-year-old festival’s mission, Bergman says, overcoming barriers of background and jargon through cinematic monographs, character studies (both boldface names and underappreciated figures), and project chronicles (though only one fictional narrative to date, Kogonada’s 2017 *Columbus*, with that Indiana city’s Modernist environment as both setting and theme). “If



Photo credit: AIA/Keith Isaacs

we speak a language that other people don’t understand, that’s limiting, not expanding,” he continues. “I’m not quite sure that that is going to take us to positive places and make the world a better-designed place.”

Ivy concurs, emphasizing the imperative of inclusiveness in an era when “we are drawing close to full employment” and the field needs to expand the qualified workforce. Dialectics between avant-gardists and populists may never yield a decisive victory for either camp. “My answer is we need both,” Ivy says, noting that “what great artists always do is change our view of the world, and if you look at Bilbao, that changed the economy of Spain.” Such debates, he believes, can obscure qualities that make architects logical leaders, as societies grapple with resilience and complexity. “Architects, by nature and by training, are also analytical and problem-solvers,” he says, “and when they can combine design skill with pragmatic investigation, we have wonderful results. They can make interventions that make life better.”

Here, too, the AIA offers an institutional response, a new Leadership Institute convening in five cities to develop persuasive skills. The more citizens learn about the practical changes that democratically minded architects have brought to places like Jackson – and the more they recognize that politicians drawn from other societal sectors have offered little lately that can be called leadership – the greater the chance they may look to architects for more than impressive images.

Bill Millard is a frequent contributor to Oculus.

Another project by Duvall Decker to serve the community in Jackson, Mississippi

FEATURE

DESIGN LANGUAGE

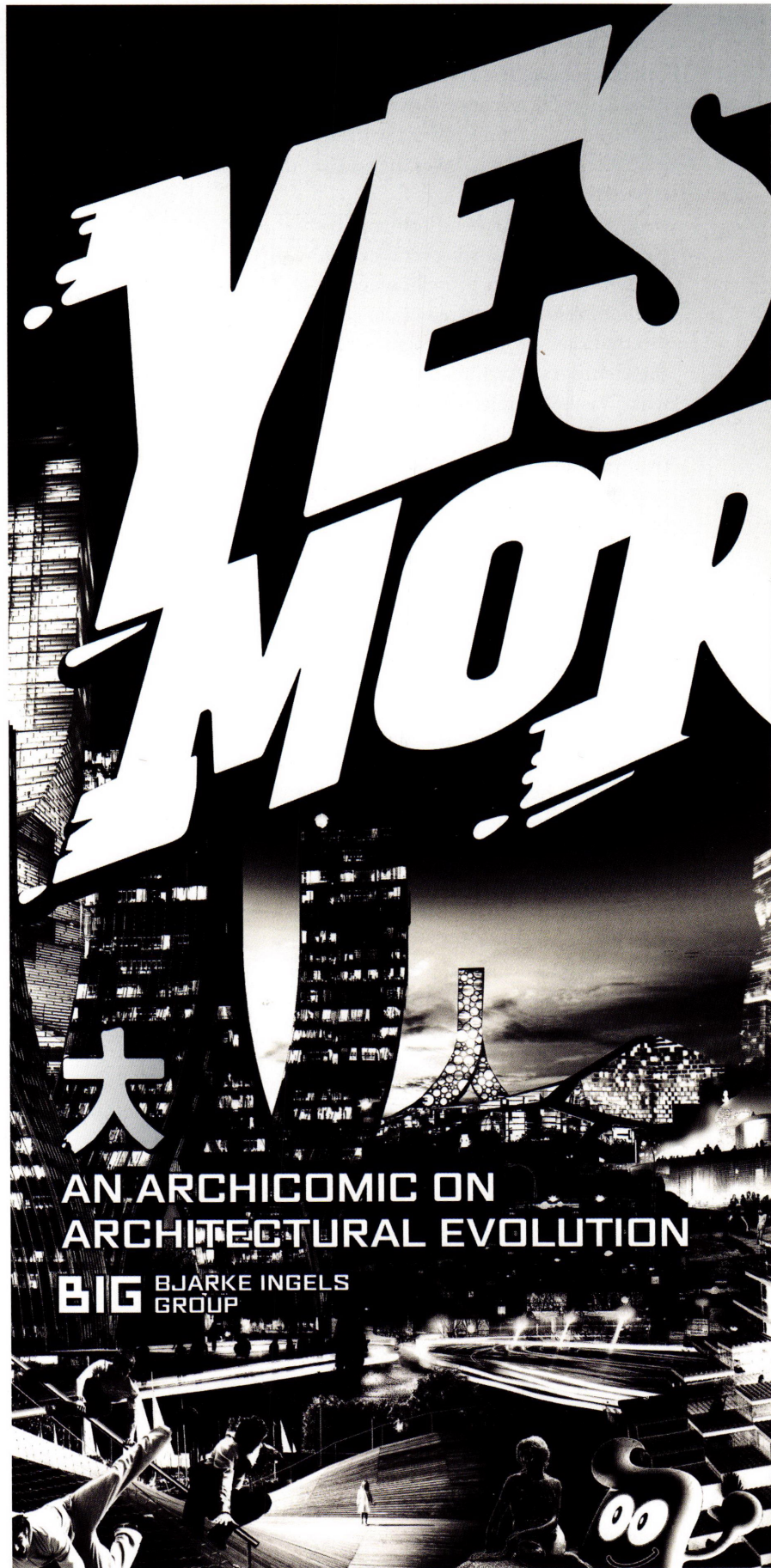
Architects are finding new ways to communicate their ideas to the public, but are they dumbing down the discourse?

BY JULIA VAN DEN HOUT

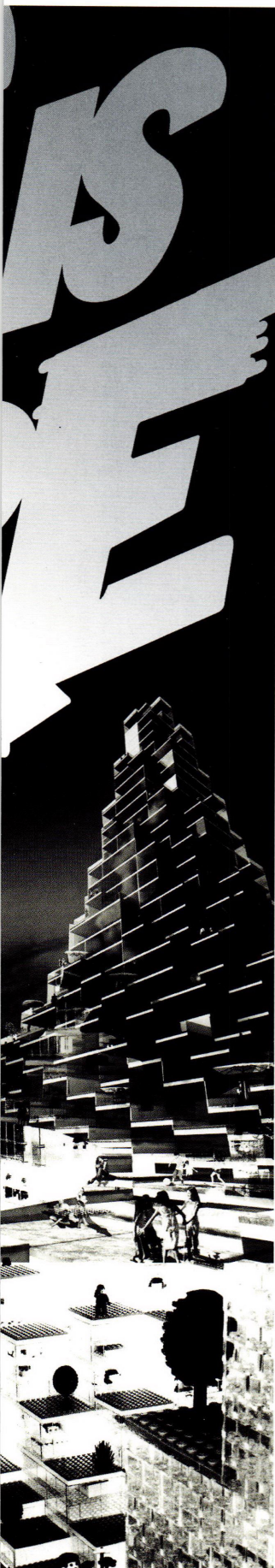
In November 2009, Taschen published *Yes Is More*, a book that arose from an exhibition at the Danish Architecture Centre earlier that year. Filled with speech bubbles and pop graphics, the book called itself an “archicomic” and introduced its charismatic protagonist, Bjarke Ingels, to an international audience.

At 35, Ingels was a welcome young face to represent architecture. What immediately hooked both architects and those outside the profession were not only his playful approach, but his over-arching message. “The architectural avant-garde is almost always negatively defined as who or what we are against,” he began in his 2009 TEDTalk. “The cliché of the radical architect is this sort of angry young man rebelling against the establishment. Or this idea of the misunderstood genius frustrated that the world doesn’t fit in with his or her ideas.” Ingels instead presented a call of optimism with his slogan, “Yes is More,” and proclaimed an interest in evolution rather than revolution.

Not surprisingly, Ingels became architecture’s newest superstar, and his firm, Bjarke Ingels Group, quickly grew to the 12 partners and three locations it has today. As Rem Koolhaas summarized in his write-up of Ingels as one of *Time* magazine’s most influential people of 2016, he is the “embodiment of a fully fledged new typology, which responds perfectly to the current zeitgeist.”



Courtesy Taschen



Bjarke Ingels' book *Yes Is More* attempted to democratize architecture through its graphic novel format and accessible language.

Indeed, he seems to be. Bjarke Ingels signaled a significant shift in how architecture connects with the larger public. His once radically flexible and optimistic approach has now become a popular attitude, and his visual presentation style, littered with animated arrows and diagrammatic views, has spread across design schools.

But at what cost? The design process can't realistically be reduced to an easily digestible step-by-step outline. While it may allow clients to understand the resulting design as the inevitable outcome of circumstances, it quickly misrepresents the intricacies of the profession. The opening up of architecture to a global non-architecture audience seems to have scared us out of the conceptual and theoretical corners of discourse, not only in how we project outwards, but even internally. Across the United States, a new stress on practicality has invaded architecture education, and our most significant theory books still stem from the 20th century.

In 2015, ArchDaily questioned the "juxtaposition between regular and professional speech." The website asked its readers, "Which words do architects use too much?" The query prompted an outpouring of responses, which were summarized by editor Rory Stott in a list of "150 weird words that only architects use."

Click-bait title aside, as a crowd-sourced list this is a telling account of how architecture communicates, both inside the discipline and with the public. What are the terms we are tired of hearing? Have we outgrown phrases of the past, and has our language evolved? What words are not successful outside of our internal conversations? On the amusing side, the list included obscure words that architects tend to overuse (*iconic*, *gestalt* and, of course, *zeitgeist*), but it was simultaneously problematic, categorizing terms like vault, arcade, cantilever, and mullion as "architecture-specific jargon." Many terms listed are generally accepted English terms for architectural elements, much like we know a surgeon dissects not with a knife, but a scalpel. What happens when a profes-

sion loses patience and acceptance of its own technical terms?

Understanding and focusing on the larger public is important – especially in a field like architecture, where design is always for a user. Communication with the public is what takes architecture from the page into three-dimensional built form. It can't be done without a client, public approvals, and a construction crew to build it. But it is vital to recognize that there is value in multiple ways of communicating. Selling an idea to a client, an architect stresses different aspects of a design than when seeking approvals from a community board. And being able to engage with a non-architecture audience does not mean we should dismiss the discourse within academic and institutional environments as a crucial tool to drive forward the profession, even if it may result in jargon.

In fact, the general public is more connected than ever to architecture. Thanks in large part to architecture's ability to engage in the visually driven world of digital media, the understanding of architecture outside the discipline has greatly increased in the last few years. Apps like Instagram might risk reducing architecture to a picture-perfect snap of bite-sized design, but they offer a reach unlike any before. A firm like Herzog & de Meuron has more than 300,000 followers, a significant audience to whom it can expose its work on a daily basis. It's not just a matter of scrolling through attractive images, but it allows an element of participation. When OMA unveiled a redesigned website in 2015, the firm cited a "new level of accessibility" as the primary reason for the switch from its minimal black pages to a bold white format. The new site was offered as a "tool for many different users," not only in the archival data it provided, but in showing the firm's work post-occupancy.

Rather than reducing our means of communication to the general public's level of understanding, we should use our newfound self-awareness to encourage engagement and curiosity, and to expand knowledge of the field.

Julia van den Hout is the founder of Original Copy, an editorial, curatorial, and architectural research office.



Images credit: Wilson Meany

FEATURE

TOWARDS A MORE CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

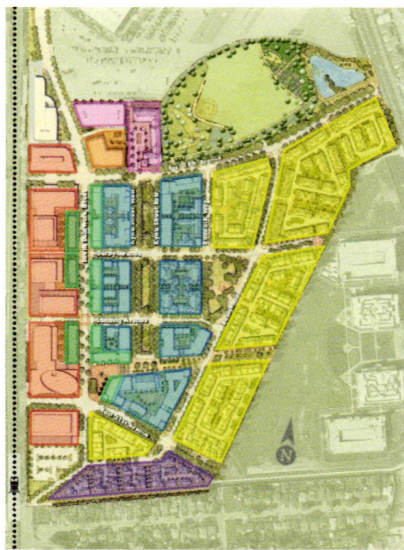
Architects are taking on more public roles by working with government or running for office.

BY ALEX ULAM

Many design decisions that architects make are constrained by zoning laws, environmental regulations, and project financing. In recent years, however, there has been a growing interest in breaking through the boundaries and exploring how architecture can be used to improve the overall human condition.

The profession has engaged in much soul-searching about its potential influence on issues

such as climate change and the widening gap between rich and poor. One example is the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, where curator Alejandro Aravena devoted much of his show to exploring ways to house the growing number of the world's population living in slums. Landmark shows at New York City's Museum of Modern Art have examined the foreclosure crisis and the impacts of rising sea levels.



LEFT AND ABOVE

The plan for Bay Meadows, a new development in San Mateo, California. Mayor Jack Matthews, an architect, helped make the project more connected and pedestrian-friendly.

Another example of how the profession is responding to social issues is a new Civic Leadership Program at the AIA New York Chapter. The program educates architects on how to navigate New York City's complex network of municipal agencies and land review processes. "Not everyone can be a congressperson or a mayor," said Justin Pascone, policy coordinator at AIA New York, "but there is a spectrum of ways to get involved. We have had architects who have worked for community development agencies, community organizations and city council members."

Architects who have held public office say the profession has not had the impact it potentially could have. "As a profession, we have been too confined to the ivory tower," says Jack Matthews, an architect who served on the city council of San Mateo, California, and has been mayor of the city for two terms. "We don't have time to engage in our community, but the community needs architects in the public sphere to participate and engage with others to make decisions about the environment."

Matthews said his background as an architect enabled him to be more effective in negotiating urban guidelines for a large project in San Mateo called Bay Meadows, to make it more pedestrian-friendly. "I had some real specific influence on how the streets were laid out to provide long views and a pedestrian mall," he said. "As an architect, you have a sense of the scale of things."

Interestingly, the architectural profession was more political in the past. "In the 19th century, there was a big battle over whether architecture should be dealing with the social and politi-

cal aspects of our nation, or be looked upon as a piece of sculpture," said Richard Swett, an architect, former congressman, and author of *Leadership by Design*, a book about the civic leadership potential of the profession. According to Swett, "That battle was waged and lost on the social architecture side at the 1919 AIA convention in Nashville, Tennessee. There was a vote, and the profession decided it wasn't important to be involved in the leadership of our society."

In his book, Swett looks at Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham, who rebuilt Chicago after the great fire there. "These were people who were involved with bigger issues," he said. "Those were the examples of what I was looking at, and today the country is in dire need of being rebuilt because now all our infrastructure is more than a century old."

However, the AIA currently does not have much influence in Washington, according to Swett. "The AIA does not have a very impressive political action committee or agenda in regard to national issues," he said. "When I started out it was almost non-existent, and it didn't mean a hill of beans to the AIA. They were not even taking a serious look to understand what benefits they could have from having one of our profession in Congress."

Swett, who said he is the only architect who has been a member of Congress in the 20th century, served on a committee that dealt with public transportation and infrastructure. He said his education as an architect enabled him to be particularly effective. "Anything that had a technical background with it, I was more proficient than the rest of my colleagues in Congress," he said, "and had a sense of how these things needed to be balanced."

According to Swett, the profession cannot afford to sit on the sidelines anymore, and the uproar over AIA CEO Robert Ivy's letter offering to help President Donald Trump with his infrastructure bill was a colossal mistake. "The backlash came from people who were being very shallow," he said. "They acted as though we were offering Trump help, rather than helping the president of the United States solve a very big problem – the repairing of our infrastructure. Anyone who responds based on that kind of reaction is part of the problem, not part of the solution."

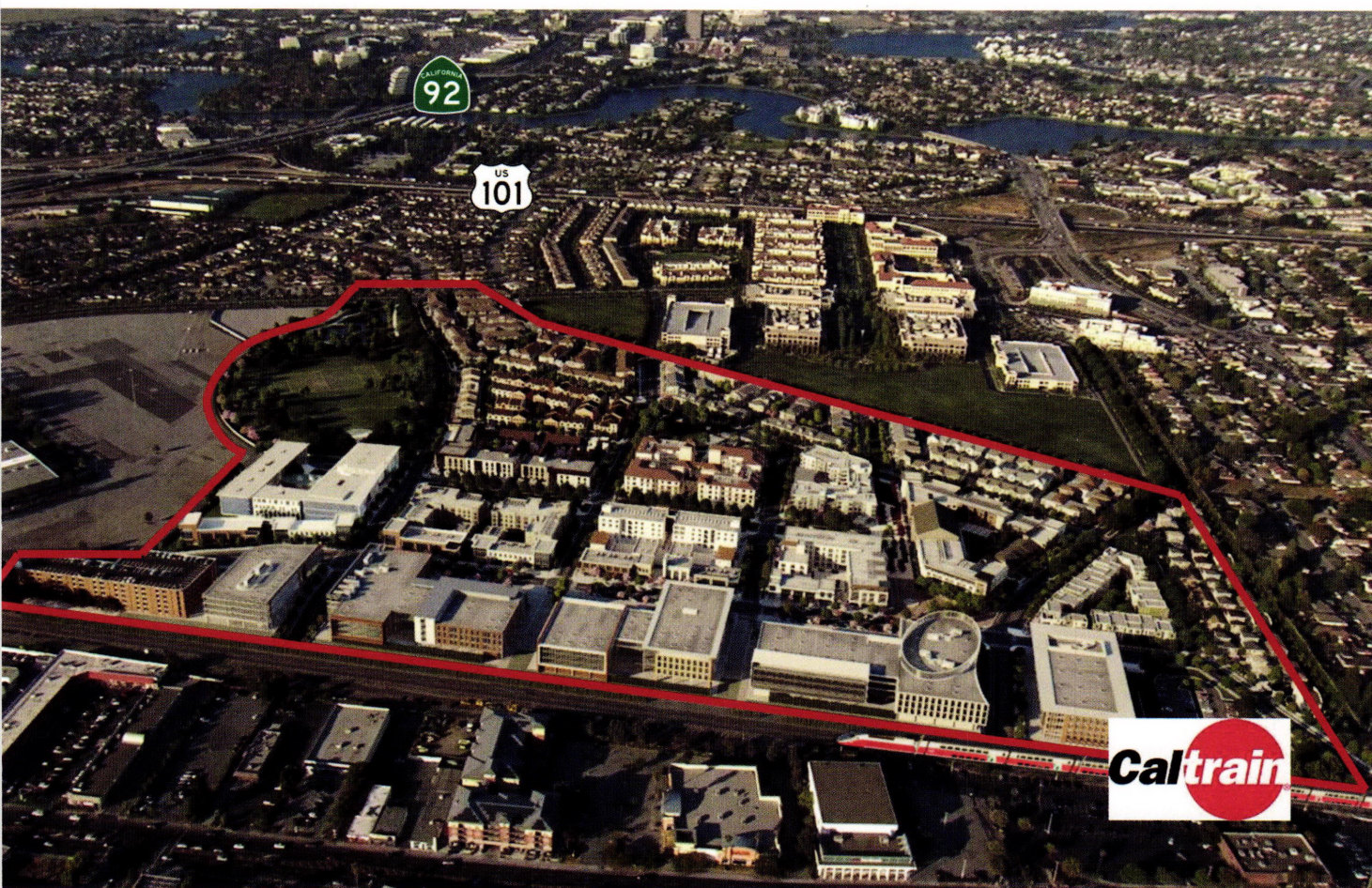


Image credit: Wilson Meany

On a local level in New York City, there are examples of architects tackling other critical social issues, such as prison reform. At a forum titled *And Justice for All: Reconstructing Just Potentials*, held at the AIA New York Chapter last November, sponsored by the Civic Leadership Program, NADAAA Principal Daniel Gallagher presented a plan that showed how New York City could build a more humane jail system. The exercise was inspired by the planned closing of the notorious Rikers Island Jail complex, a place rife with violence where 80% of prisoners have not even been convicted of a crime, and the average annual cost of housing a prisoner is \$250,000.

Gallagher's plan showed a system of cheerful-looking borough-based jails called "Justice Hubs," which would enable people to visit incarcerated relatives and friends much more easily than is the case at Rikers, where visiting a prisoner can be an all-day affair. Gallagher, who developed his plan under the auspices of the Justice in Design competition, hosted by the Van Alen Institute, said his mandate was "to create a set of programs and

design principles for future jails in New York, to understand how design could be an active part of the process."

Gallagher's firm engaged in a broad series of conversations with different stakeholders to establish how the Justice Hubs could be integrated into local communities. The system would allow for faster due process and incorporate post-release services to help formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into the city. The designs NADAAA developed also emphasized qualities lacking at the ten-jail Rikers system, such as light, air, and access to outdoors.

"We needed to understand how this could be part of the civic experience," Gallagher said of the Justice Hub exercise. Summing up a sentiment that is gaining wide currency, he added, "Let's get beyond the architecture and understand how we can connect a lot of the components in our society."

Alex Ulam writes about architecture, planning, and culture for The Nation, Maclean's, the Wall Street Journal, and other publications.

The Bay Meadows project is a transit-oriented development,

REVIEWS

Lofts of SOHO: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950–1980, by Aaron Shkuda
University of Chicago Press,
2016. Chicago. 295 pp. \$45

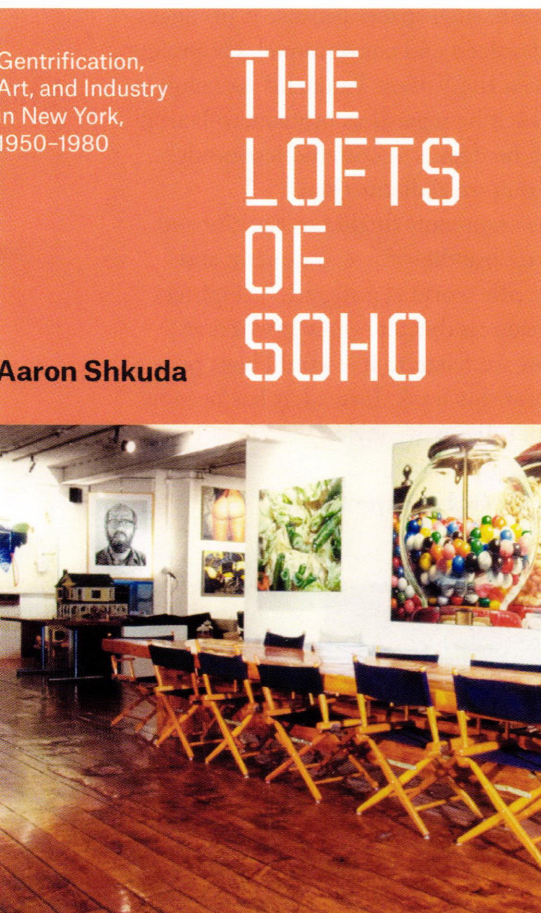


Image credit: University of Chicago Press

SOHO has become a model for the transformation of older industrial neighborhoods into vibrant communities, driven and championed primarily by the creative classes. Aaron Shkuda's book traces how this happened in New York, why it was successful, and the primary role artists had in the transformation. Success and the rising market they helped create ultimately drove the artists out to seek new destinations for inexpensive loft space in neighborhoods like Long Island City, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and Chelsea.

The SOHO model involved complex and conflicting forces, local issues particular to New York, and fortunate timing. Artists were at the forefront of the actors who drove SOHO's transformation. They self-financed, employed creativity and group labor to renovate, and organized politically to influence the city to legalize SOHO's industrial spaces to permit artist workspace/residences. A major part of this saga was the struggle for legalization, which was waged with the mayor, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Buildings, the fire department, and the New York State Multiple Dwelling Law.

As a seemingly decrepit industrial neighborhood in decline, SOHO was a target for urban renewal plans, middle-income housing schemes, and the Lower Manhattan Expressway. But the growing backlash against urban renewal, the defeat of Robert Moses's expressway, and the 1963 Rapkin Report favoring the retention of industrial jobs in SOHO removed these external threats. The growing interest in preserving and reusing the city's older industrial and cast-iron architecture also focused on SOHO as a resource to be saved.

The city faced a dilemma: Should it work to retain semiskilled and unskilled industrial jobs, or support regeneration via the artists and galleries, reinforcing New York's position as the center of the global art world? The answer was the result of the speedy deindustrialization of SOHO and the rapidly growing arts presence, willing to backfill the vacated space.

In August 1961 Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. signed the first agreement, under threat of an artists' strike, to allow artists to reside legally in SOHO lofts. The agreement was temporary and incomplete, and it took more steps and time to enshrine this right into law. Success stimulated developers to press for greater legalization under statute as well as to push artists

out. In 1982, New York State enacted the NYC Loft Board to regulate the conversion of older manufacturing and commercial uses to residential as Article 7-C of the Multiple Dwelling Law, which created a new classification, Intermediate Multiple Dwellings. This provision was amended in 2010 and 2014.

Shkuda's history demonstrates that positive urban change is complex, involves many stakeholders, and takes time, but it can work. Urbanists, take heed!

Common Sense, Building a World to Share: A Treatise in Four Books, by Andrew Todd RightAngle International Publishing, 2016. Montreal. 223 pp. \$25

The major premise of this book is that the way we look at theater space is similar to the way we perceive a room, house, building, city, and the world. An English architect and theater designer, Andrew Todd offers both a treatise and a polemic that positions theater as our lens on the built and natural environments. Empathy, intimacy, and communication are the attributes that theater shares with each realm. While many of the author's observations and anecdotes are insightful, however, this thesis is not uniformly persuasive.

The book is organized into chapters on the room and house, the building, the city, and the world, as Todd applies his theater-based view of how each functions and is perceived. His observations do not necessarily respect the organization he has imposed; his style is highly digressive and personalized.

Some of these rambles are interesting. The discussion of rooms and houses leads to a presentation on the mismatches and confluences between the lifestyles of families and the ambitions and psychologies of their famous architects. He reviews some slow-forming disasters, notorious mash-ups, and short-lived tenancies: Mies van

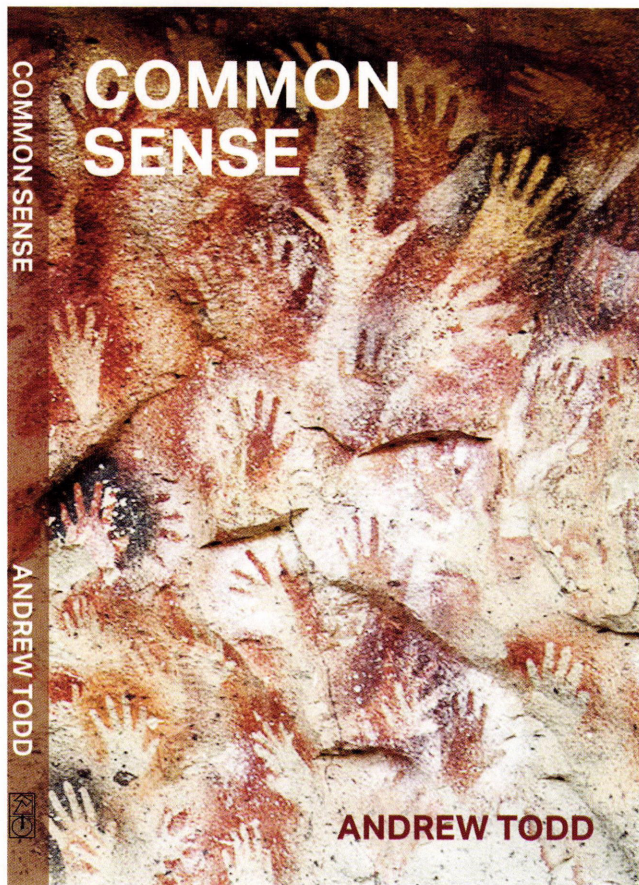


Image credit: RightAngle International

der Rohe and Edith Farnsworth, Wright and Kauffman at Fallingwater, Le Corbusier and the Villa Savoye. This – and a paean to a house consisting of linked dwellings in Northern Italy, which contains all the attributes he associates with theater – he lands squarely in favor of the anonymous vernacular.

Todd correctly argues that performance is unique, temporal, and intimate, but insists that it needs open-ended, seemingly indeterminate space, or at least space capable of significant rearrangement. He contends that high modernism has failed to create such spaces because it produces theaters that are standardized and conventional. He prefers the crummy basement of the Village Vanguard jazz club in Greenwich Village, which he regards as protean, to Jazz at Lincoln Center, which he damns as stiff and less productive. These tend to be rhetorical distinctions.

As Todd extends his arguments further to the city and the world, they begin to lose their force, fragment, and become metaphors (“...the world is a stage...”). Tighter editing and a closer focus on theater – how it works in various guises, and how we relate to it – would have provided a sounder basis for this book. Instead, it has become a pretext for the author’s digressive style.

Stanley Stark, FALA, is the book critic for Oculus.



ONE BLOCK OVER

RED HOOK

The once isolated neighborhood is taking a turn in the spotlight.

BY CLAIRE WILSON



Red Hook Point designed by Foster + Partners with public spaces and landscape by SCAPE.

Uber-cool Red Hook, Brooklyn, has somehow managed to escape the kind of high-rise residential development slated for oh-so-many other waterfront neighborhoods around the city, particularly in the outer boroughs. Unlike Long Island City, Greenpoint, Gowanus, and the South Bronx, isolated Red Hook remains zoned for manufacturing, and it looks like it will stay that way, at least for now.

It has a kind of gritty glory to it – not to mention rich history – that

people seem drawn to, despite a lack of amenities and less than efficient transit options. Companies of all sizes are coming to the once-bustling port area, where the majority of the building stock is low-rise former factories or marine repair shops, some of it long vacant or underused. Other buildings were seriously damaged by Superstorm Sandy.

UPS is the latest to announce new facilities in the enclave, 60% of whose residential population lives in the Red

Hook Houses, a low-income complex with some 6,290 residents. The package delivery company is renting a 12-acre site with multiple buildings for use as a distribution center. Tesla Motors leases space in a renovated warehouse at 160 Van Brunt Street, where Milan-based Princi, a division of Starbucks, is about to open a bakery café.



Image credit: Foster + Partners

Ample Hills Creamery will open an ice cream factory in 15,000 square feet of space owned by the O'Connell Organization at 141 Beard Street. This complements other tenants in the O'Connell portfolio, which includes small creative businesses like Flickinger Glassworks, Fleishers Craft Butchery, and the Red Hook Winery.

Meanwhile, new construction is rare in Red Hook. Thor Equities has announced plans for Red Hook Point, a 7.7-acre waterfront office complex designed by Foster + Partners. It will include 795,000 square feet of office space, 23,000 square feet of restaurant/retail space, and 3.6 acres of green roof. SCAPE is designing a public courtyard and waterfront promenade.

New residential units are scarce in Red Hook, best known in recent years as the location of the city's only IKEA store, hip destination eateries like the Red Hook Lobster Pound, and glitzy weddings at Liberty Warehouse, the latest waterfront brainchild of Buzzy O'Keefe, owner of the storied River Café. A 70-unit condo conversion of the vintage 1910 New York Dock Building, done by Brooklyn-based AA Studio, is the only newcomer, and it is almost completely sold out.



If Red Hook development is slow by New York City standards, blame transportation or lack thereof. There is water taxi service, but the nearest subway is 1.5 miles away, and there is only one bus line. New subway stations have been proposed, but it is unlikely they will be built any time soon, if at all.

O'Connell, a retired NYPD detective who owns about one million square feet of property in Red Hook, including the Fairway building, sees the area as a haven for artists, craftspeople, and companies like Ample Hills Creamery, his newest tenant.

ABOVE The project will bring offices, retail, restaurants, and new public spaces to the Red Hook waterfront.

BOTTOM Once isolated, Red Hook is becoming a destination in its own right.

He keeps his rents low, in the \$12 to \$20 per square foot range, to appeal to those people and companies. By comparison, the going rate is about \$40 per square foot in the renovated Tesla building, and \$20 per square foot in the South Bronx, where some building stock is similar.

O'Connell bemoans the way urban areas push out small businesses,



and hopes more see Red Hook as an option. “We don’t do enough to address creative industries,” he said. “Creative people come out of Pratt, and we don’t have affordable space for them.”

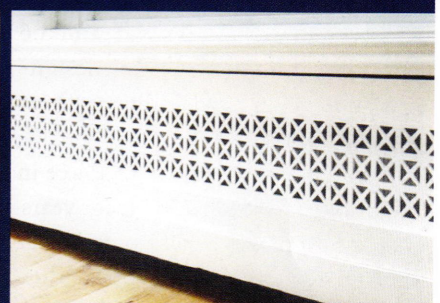
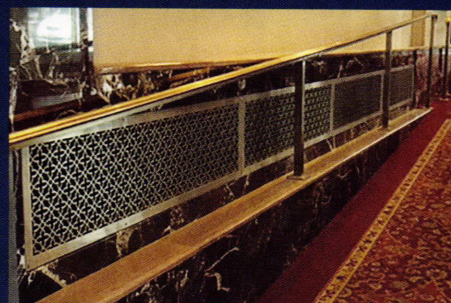
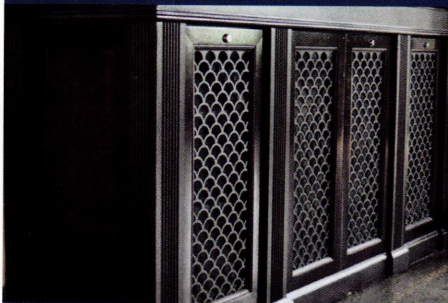
His vision for Red Hook is rooted in its history. “It could be a great example of a real balanced neighborhood,” he said. “Historically, this was a working waterfront whose workers lived in the area and went to the

churches and the local schools. It still has a great feeling to it. People love it.”

Claire Wilson is a longtime contributor to Oculus and the New York Times.

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TALK

Blue Dunes: Climate Change By Design

Center for Architecture

February 1, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

EVENT

Family Day: I Love NYC: 3D Views

Center for Architecture

February 3, 2018 11:00AM-1:00PM and 2:00PM to 4:00PM

OPENING

Social Housing: New European Projects

Center for Architecture

February 15, 2018 6:00PM-8:00 PM

EVENT

Leadership Breakfast with Angela O'Byrne

Center for Architecture

February 16, 2018 8:00AM-9:00AM

EVENT

K-12 Vacation Program

Center for Architecture

February 20, 2018 9:00AM-4:00PM

TALK

Black History: A Legacy of Contributions

Center for Architecture

February 21, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

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TALK

Displacement: Designing for Diplomacy

Center for Architecture

February 22, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

TALK

Oculus Book Talk: The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion

Center for Architecture

March 1, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

EVENT

Cocktails & Conversation:

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien

Center for Architecture

March 2, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

EVENT

Family Day: Animal Architecture

Center for Architecture

March 3, 2018 11:00AM-1:00PM

TALK

Donald Judd and Architecture

Center for Architecture

March 5, 2018 6:00PM-8:00PM

EVENT

K-12 Vacation Program: Project Green: Reduce, Reuse, Redesign

Center for Architecture

March 20, 2018 9:00AM-4:00PM

EVENT

K-12 Summer Programs Info Session

Center for Architecture

March 22, 2018 3:00PM-5:00PM

EVENT

Family Day: Design for Living

Center for Architecture

April 14, 2018 11AM-4:00PM

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