

AIA Indiana

S K E T C H E S

WINTER 2000

2000 AIA MEETING CALENDAR

Jan. 18	Board Meeting/ Indianapolis
Jan. 27-29	Grassroots/Washington D.C.
Feb. 22	Executive Board Meeting/Indianapolis
Mar. 28	Board Meeting/ Indianapolis
April 25	Executive Board Meeting/Indianapolis
May 5-7	AIA National Convention/Philadelphia
May 23	Board Meeting/ Indianapolis
June 27	Executive Board Meeting/tba
July 25	Board Meeting/ Indianapolis
Aug. 22	Executive Board Meeting/Indianapolis
Sept. 26	Board Meeting
Oct. 13-15	AIA IN/KY Convention/Louisville
Nov. 28	Board Meeting/ Indianapolis
Dec. 15	Executive Board Meeting

PLEASE ADD TO YOUR ROSTER

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BSU DEPT. OF ARCHITECTURE ADDS GLUE

by Neal Beckstedt, Luke Brown, Lohren Deeg,
Amanda Eich

For the first time, the Ball State College of Architecture is producing a student journal. *Glue* is among us. Coming soon to a coffee table near you will be images and projects, stories and tales of places far and away, the artwork and paths of inquiry that perhaps you haven't traveled in years. All bound in a package seen with the raw vision of the architecture student, spoken to you in the voice of the architecture student, produced by the very hands of the architecture student. *Glue* is the tie that binds. On April 8 you could have, your very own BSU architecture journal. Collectors item? Perhaps. Unveiling in April. *Glue* is your connection.

Contact the BSU journal editors and let us know how many you want: one, two, ten...
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VIEWPOINT

JOURNEY TO NEPAL

Do you know the way to Kathmandu?

by Jackson Faber, AIA

If someone had asked me last August when I started teaching architecture at Ball State University if I had ever thought of going to Kathmandu, I would have answered, "Only when I hear Bob Seger's song about going there." I never considered it a possibility, but the opportunity arose in February of this year. Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal, made an agreement with Ball State University to exchange ideas, resources, and professors. Tribhuvan University asked me if I would come to Nepal to teach a short course on AutoCAD and lecture on computer use in design. After thinking about it, discussing it with my wife, and receiving financial aid from both universities, I decided that I had nothing to lose. When else in my life would I have the opportunity to travel to such an exotic location? So, I packed my bags and left on a 27-hour plane ride to the land of the highest mountain on the planet.

Before going too far, I should give some background information on Nepal. Nepal is located between India and Tibet and is approximately the size of Maine. Kathmandu is the capitol and has an approximate population of 500,000. It also has an extremely varying climate, from the subtropical jungle at the border of India to the sub-zero temperatures at the top of Mt. Everest. Kathmandu is located within a valley and is bordered to the north by the Himalayan Mountains, which can be seen from many of the city's holy sites and roof decks.

As I flew into Kathmandu, I could see the city spread out towards the edges of the valley. The flat-roofed buildings were glowing in the afternoon sunlight in different shades of orange, red, and gray. I could see very little vegetation in the city, and I also noticed that all the buildings were approximately the same height. I discovered that the similar heights were due to the local construction methods. Older buildings were entirely load-bearing construction, but newer construction was built with a concrete skeleton with brick in-fill. These methods became prevalent because lumber is very expensive and is mainly used for decorative purposes. The buildings were all approximately three to four stories in height, with only a very few being six stories tall. The reason for this is that the Himalayan Mountain range is continually growing taller due to the fact that India is sliding under the Asian continent. This creates numerous earthquakes throughout the country and no thought is given to dealing with the seismic stresses in the brick structures. Another reason for the relatively low buildings is that there are no cranes or machinery for getting building materials to a high elevation. To give an example, I saw some men working on a building, and they suspended woven baskets from their heads, which rested on their backs. They then had the baskets loaded with bricks or concrete. After being fully loaded, they would carry them up ladders to the floor where the work was being done. The workers would unload their baskets, climb down, and then do it all over again. This work was going on while it was approximately 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

After finally landing in Kathmandu, I exited the plane, went through customs, got my baggage, and made my way to the exit doors of the airport. I was warned that I should know exactly where I wanted to go before I left the airport because I was going to be mobbed by people wanting me to stay at their hotel or use their taxi. Even though I was told that, I was not prepared for the actual experience. I reached the exit door, looked out, and saw two to three hundred people pressed up against barricades that the police put up so the international travelers would at least be able to get out of the airport. Seeing this, I paused to gather my bags, then ventured between five armed police officers and into the chaos. Before I made it out of the door, three people were on both sides of me asking if I wanted a hotel or taxi. I couldn't figure out how they got around the barricade, but that was the least of my worries. I was focused. I was trying to locate someone with a sign that had my name on it because the hotel said that they would send someone to pick me up. At this point, I had probably moved only six feet from the door, and more people were coming in my direction. I suddenly saw my name, but how I was able to see it—I have no idea. There was a young Nepalese kid with a sign that had my name on it, but I should actually call it a card because it must have been only 5" x 7" and written with what looked like a pencil. I pointed at the kid, and he pointed to the end of the barricade.

When the guys who were trying to get me to come to their hotel saw that I found who I was looking for, some of them left to accost more visitors from the plane. The people that stayed with me were children who now wanted to help me with my bags. They tried to take my bag off my shoulder, they tried to pull my luggage for me, and they ran in front of me and moved things out of the way as I walked away from the airport. We finally made it to a car, got my luggage in, and I pulled myself in while trying not to smash any of the children's arms when I shut the door. I sat down, relaxed, and closed my eyes. I then felt little hands reaching in from the windows tapping me and pulling on my collar. "Teeps? You have teeps for me?" The children were all saying. I was told to say, "No," but it was hard to do because they were filthy with no shoes on their feet and oil stained clothing. They didn't stop asking until the car drove away fast enough that they had to take their arms out of the window.

After all that, my nerves were on edge. Now it was time for my first experience with how they drive in Kathmandu. They drive on the left, like in England, but that's where the similarity ends. They have a white line that runs down the middle of the road, but nobody pays any attention to it. Cars would pass each other right into oncoming traffic. It was total madness, and I was surprised probably five or six times that we didn't wreck before we made it to the hotel. We reached it safely, I was shown to my room, I sat down, and said to myself, "What in the hell did I get myself into?"



The main mode of transportation in Kathmandu is the motorcycle. I would see entire families on one motorcycle. The largest family that I saw on one motorcycle was a family of four. The father was driving, the mother was riding side-saddle on the back, between the parents was a young child under 10 years old, and finally between the father's legs was a small child roughly 5 years old or younger. All had helmets on, but they also were wearing masks for breathing due to the very bad air pollution of the city. Since there is relatively no grass or green spaces in the city, dust and dirt is everywhere. The main public transportation is by bus or three-wheeled canvas-covered carts called "Tempos." Both of these belch black smoke and smog into the air. So, there was a large majority of people that wore masks while they were riding motorcycles, bicycles, and even walking down the street. Numerous people use bicycles for transportation, and in my opinion, it was the best for getting around the narrow medieval streets of the city.

The city is a conglomeration of very few large main streets and a massive web of small meandering roads and paths, all of which were built as needed without any sense of planning. An interesting fact about the city is that a majority of the streets do not have names and the buildings do not have addresses. In order to receive mail, people get a post office box because there is no way that a mail carrier would be able to find a residence.

The architecture of the city is amazing. It is absolutely like nothing we have here in America. What struck me first was the amount of brick structures that are located within the city. It appears as if everything is brick. I discovered that the reason for proliferation of brick construction is because the soil is so rich in clay that it is the easiest and most durable material to use. I was able to see how much clay soil the country has in it when I was taken to Tibet. While we were driving through the countryside, I could look out the truck window and see the bright orange color of the soil. In fact, the trees were stained orange from the soil about six feet up the trunk. As the tree grew, the soil stained the bark, and it didn't wash off as it became taller. It was the weirdest thing to see dark orange tree trunks.

In Kathmandu, the residential buildings were very interesting. But what really stood out was the numerous temples located throughout the city. Religion is such an important part of Nepali society that one can not go very far without coming across some religious structure, temple, or offering site. I spent one morning trying to find one of these religious sites, which was very difficult because there are no straight roads or street signs, and the maps of the city do not distinguish between paved roads and dirt paths. As I approached the site, I had no idea that I was close. The narrow street was crowded with people, wild dogs, and chickens, and at one point even an elephant. After passing through the congestion, the openness of the palace square seemed to explode out in every direction. I was looking for a place called Durbar Square and it amazed me when I finally found it. Durbar means "Palace" and many Nepali towns have one. These squares were palaces for the king that ruled the town. The one that I found was not actually in Kathmandu, but in a small town called Patan that had been swallowed by Kathmandu's sprawl years ago. It was an oasis within the city. It contained a very large brick palace on one side, and an assortment of Buddhist and Hindu temples on the other. The organization of the square was very well thought out and the proportioning of the temples played off the grand scale of the palace. The separation between the temples and the palace was a brick paved path that was on axis with one snow-capped Himalayan mountain peak. The Buddhist temples are Mandirs, which resemble pagodas. A Buddhist monk who traveled to eastern Asia took the Mandir design out of Nepal. The design was adopted by the Japanese and evolved into what is now the Pagoda.

One item in the Durbar Square palaces, temples, and nearby buildings that really impressed me was something called an "Artist Window." I was told that artist windows were so prevalent in certain areas of the city because they represented artist districts and the craft of the artist that lived in the building where the window was situated. This meant that someone could walk by and see the quality and expertise of the artist that lived within the building.

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