

Summer | 2005



# PRACTICE

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS NEW YORK CHAPTER VOLUME 67 ISSUE 3 \$10

Opportunities and Pitfalls in the Business of Architecture

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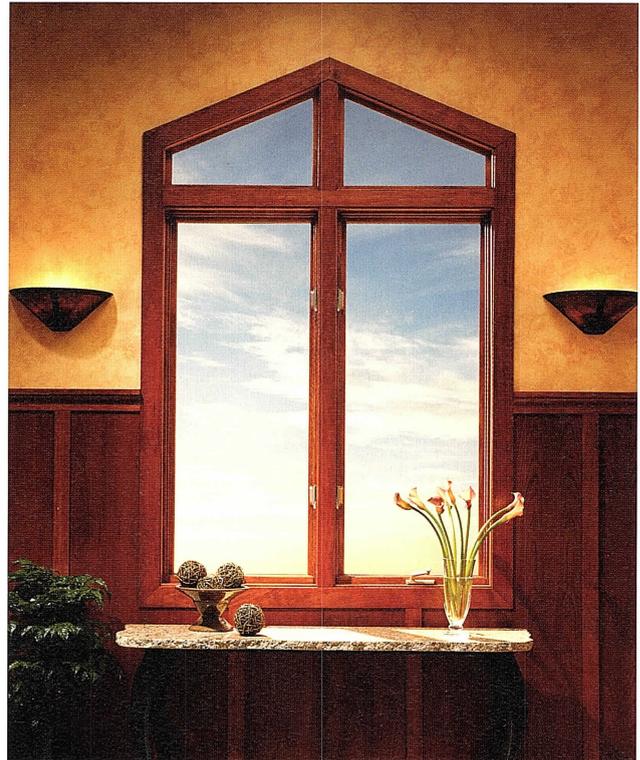
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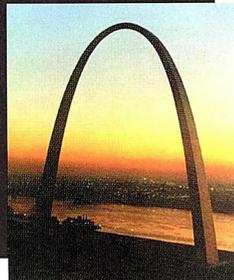
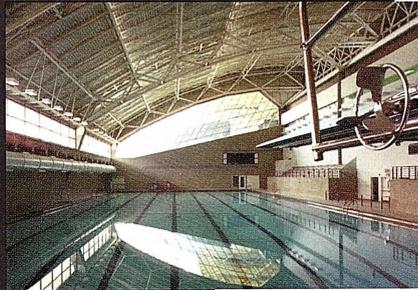
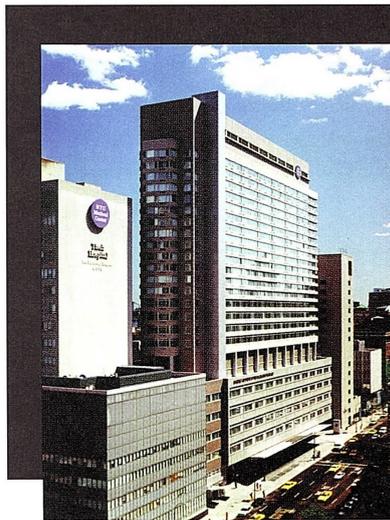
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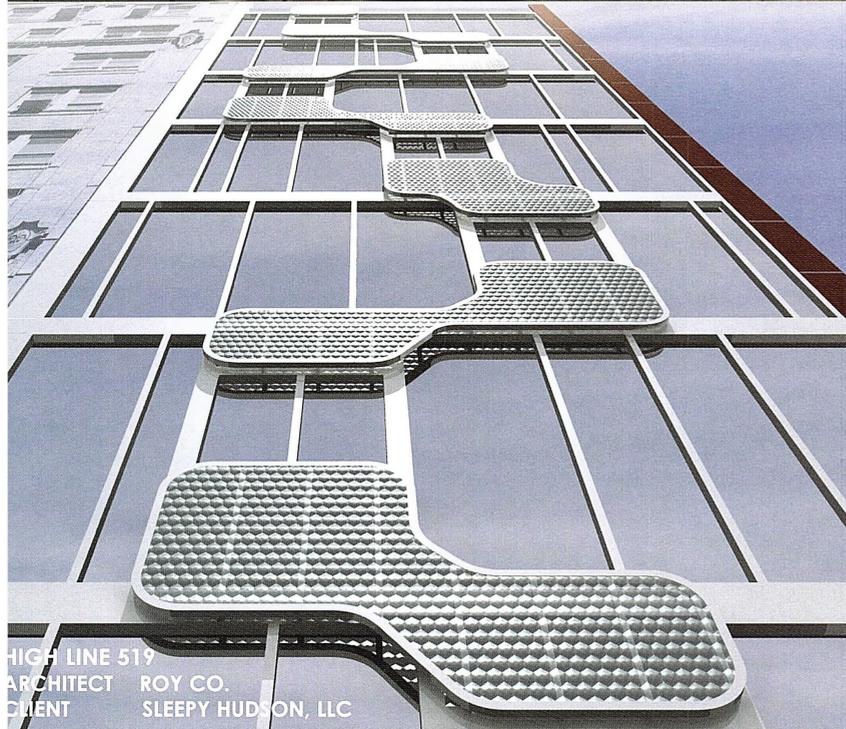
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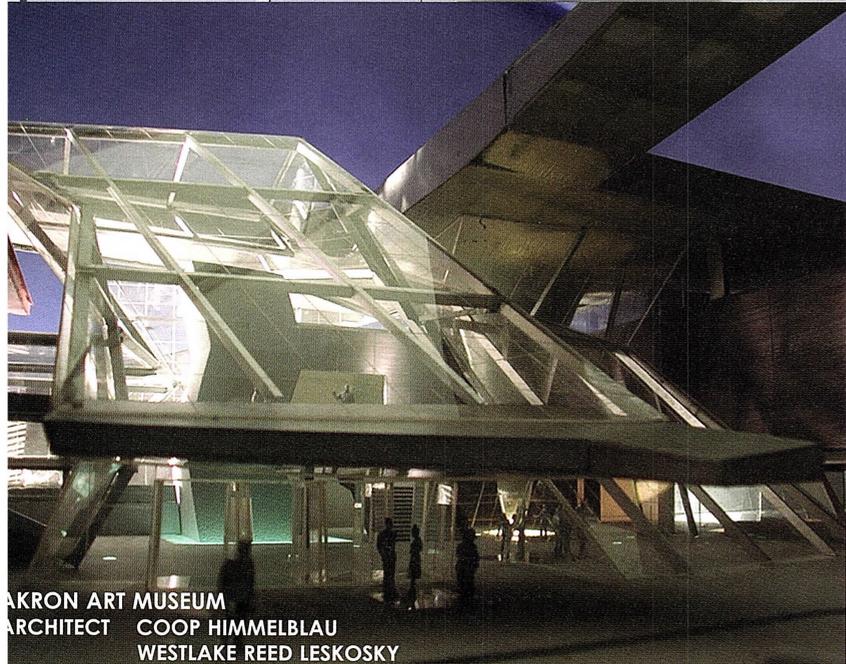
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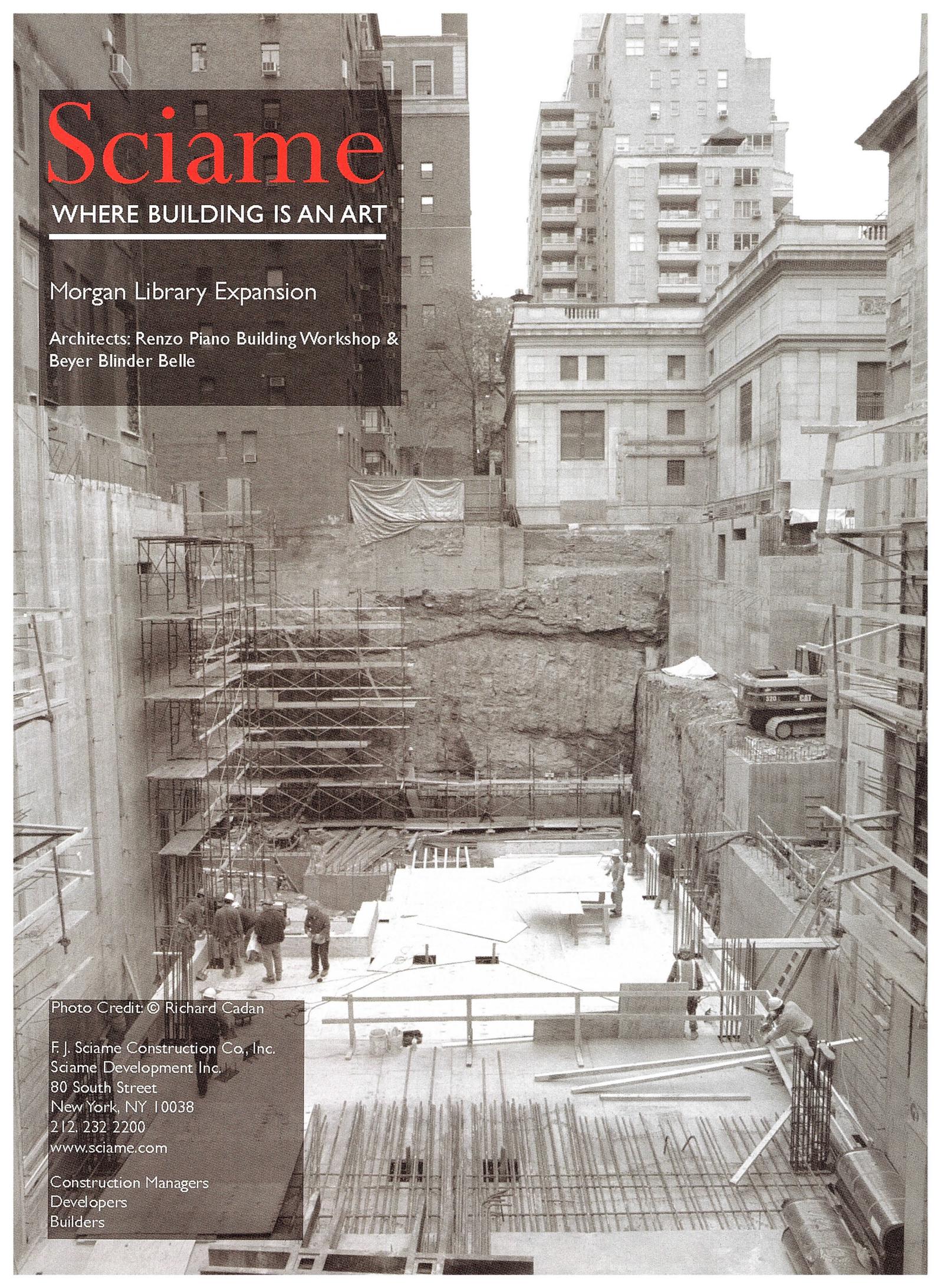
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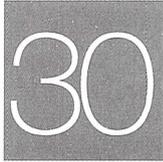
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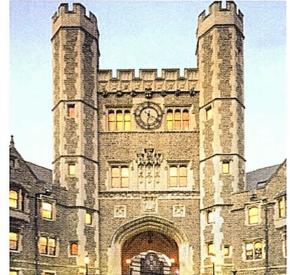
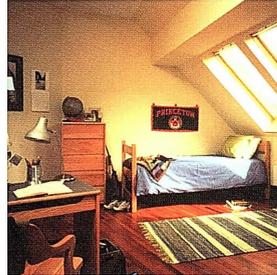
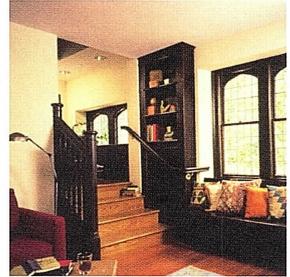
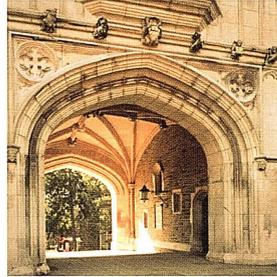
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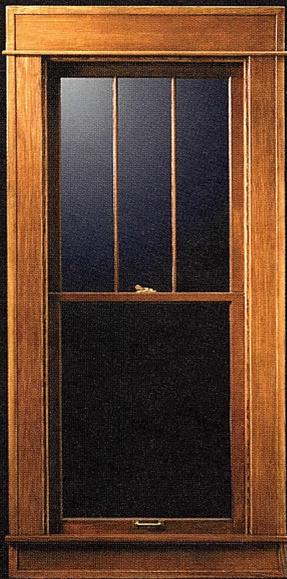
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# Metamorphic Practice

First Words  
Letter from the President

Whizz, brrr, brrring, ring...the sounds of Las Vegas surrounded the AIA National Convention in May – where we found the world of “slots” in every room, themed entertainment, deluxe dining, and stage set architecture. Now you don’t have to leave the country to visit Mandalay Bay, Monte Carlo, New York, Venice, and Paris, and experience the wonder and the terror of simulacra in the desert. Now on the plane, I am searching for common ground with the types of practices that create these places, so different from my own in New York’s public sector. In New York, our museums, performance spaces, botanical gardens, zoos, and aquariums educate, but they must increasingly entertain. In Las Vegas, the hotels, casinos, and nightclubs entertain and now have added museums and galleries, gardens and aquariums to add value. The boundaries are blurring.

Crossover culture is becoming the norm. At the Center for Architecture, the “Mexico City Dialogues: New Architectural Practices” exhibition highlighted the work of young Mexican architects engaged in residential, commercial, and institutional work. I was intrigued by the fact that many young architects are also developers, or graphic designers, or even fashion designers. Academia used to point architecture students to traditional practice – internships during summers, working in a firm to gain experience and exposure, licensure, and starting one’s own practice. Now students follow their talent and opportunity and fewer young practitioners pursue licensure. There is a whole world of options open to the profession, often regarded as alternative and non-traditional practice: government, construction management, real estate development, owner’s representation, facilities management.

Similarly, we now have many paths of communication in our practices and our personal lives through e-files, video conferencing, drawing to manufacture, design/build, and IM (instant messaging). Information flow has exploded. Demand for delivering the product now and in the right format is daunting. Also, as practices become more international, either due to offshoring or booming markets in Asia and Africa, our practices must be cross cultural and our language more universal.

As we are governed by fewer and fewer boundaries and more and more connections, our practices are changing to re-imagine and reconstruct our built environments. This issue of *Oculus* looks at some evolving practices and trends that portend this exciting future.

Susan Chin, FAIA, President  
AIA New York Chapter



President among the Romans at Caesar’s Palace

The New Practices Roundtable, co-sponsored by the AIA NY Chapter and The Architect’s Newspaper, on June 16, revealed current thinking and determined topics for exploration at future roundtables scheduled for September 29 and December 7, 2005, and March 16, 2006. Come one and all! RSVP to [rsvp@aiany.org](mailto:rsvp@aiany.org)

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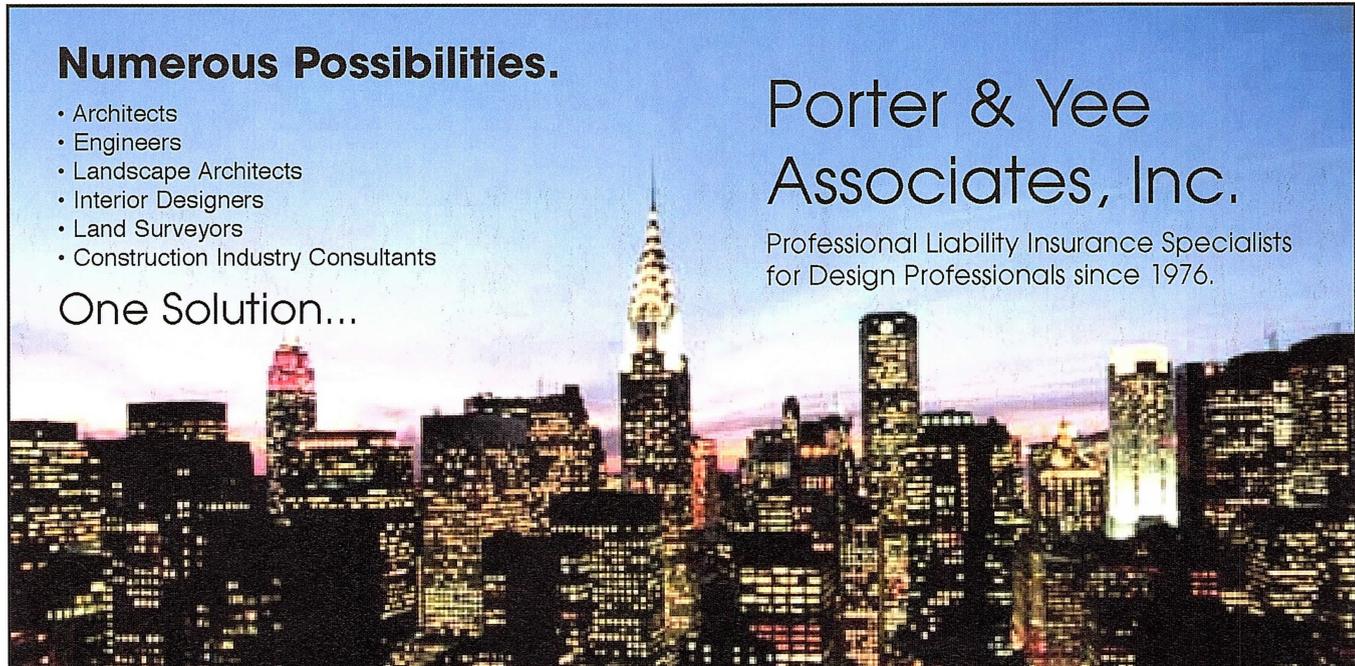
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# Taking care of Business

First Words

Letter from the Editor

“I believe our discipline will become splendidly irrelevant, if not extinct, unless new forms of engagement are cultivated.”

Mark Wigley, Dean, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Wigley (a New Zealander) was quoted in a June 4, 2005 article in the national news section of *The New Zealand Herald* headlined “Architects voice fear of extinction at conference.” The article focused on Wigley’s keynote address and the closing plenary session of the New Zealand Institute of Architects’ (NZIA) 2005 conference at the end of May themed “Taking Stock: What have we done, what we are doing, what should we do?”

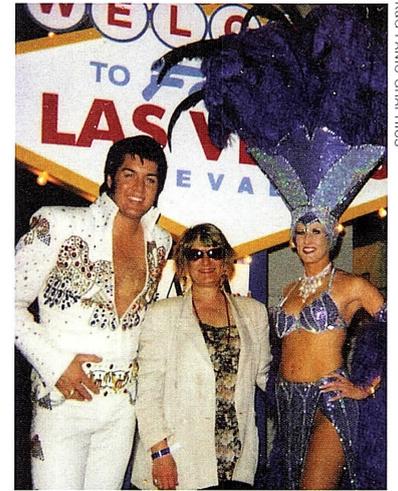
Compare that theme to the mid-May AIA conference in Las Vegas titled “The Power of Architecture.” One raises questions; the other is a declarative statement. But the issues were the same: education, technology, globalization – and changing trends in the practice of architecture. The only real difference was in the session titles. NZIA (celebrating 100 years of design while the AIA approaches 150 years), highlighted topics such as “What is Wrong with Contemporary Architecture? Can we get it Right?” and “Horses for Politically Correct Courses.” These might sound edgier than “Fifteen Trends that are Transforming the Architecture Profession” presented in Las Vegas, but the message was the same: architecture has gone far beyond design aesthetics and theory to become an extremely complex business.

An AIA NY Chapter Practice Committee roundtable in early May helped identify some of the “hot buttons” – design-build, leadership succession, risk, offshoring, among others – that this issue of *Oculus* addresses. These observations on the state of the business of architecture will raise questions for future examination – and fodder for the New Practices Roundtable series mentioned in Susan Chin’s First Words, as well as the national practice management conference, “Getting to Great,” co-sponsored by the AIA’s Practice Management Knowledge Community and the AIA NY Chapter, to be held at the Center for Architecture October 26-28, 2005.

In addition, “So Says...” features Ronnette Riley, FAIA, in a frank discussion about women in architecture and the sad state of credit and attribution. “Around the Corner” visits an amorphous Louis Vuitton flagship on Fifth Avenue. The *Denver Post*’s Kyle MacMillan offers an “Outside View” about engaging the public in its built environment. Paul Rudolph’s Tracey Towers housing complex in the Bronx gets a long-deserved second look in “33-Year Watch.” In keeping with the theme of this issue, “In Print+” reviews a new book by an architect-turned-ambassador who calls for architects to step up to the leadership plate, a web site that rates the work environment of architectural firms, and another site that offers irreverent views on architects, projects, and politics. “Last Words” is a take on our addiction to technologies that keep us too much in touch.

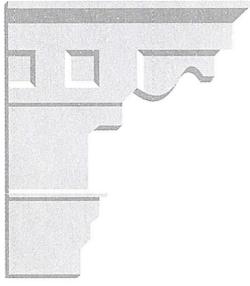
Special thanks to Stanley Stark, FAIA, and Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, for their untiring commitment to making sure this issue really deals with the issues at hand. And thanks to cartoonist Lazlo in Arizona who was given topics and came up with meaningful (and amusing) illustrations. Speaking of which: If it’s 9:00 p.m. in Shanghai it’s 9:00 a.m. in New York. Do you know where your revised CAD drawings are?

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Editor discovers Elvis never left the building

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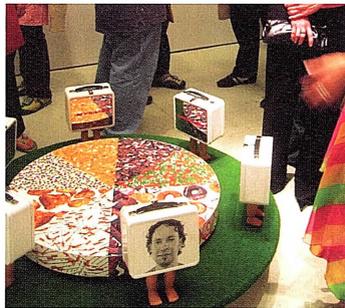
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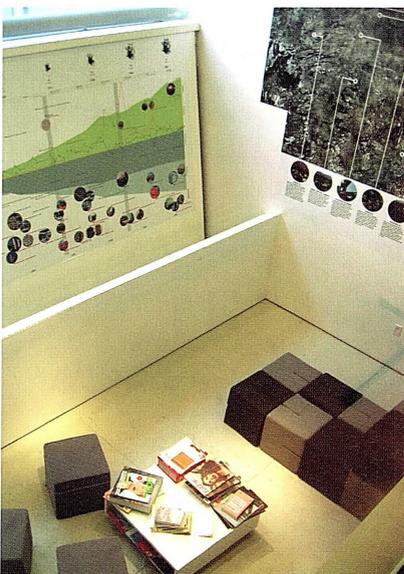
LARRY LINK PHOTOGRAPHY

**Capital Campaign Completed!** The Center for Architecture has lots to celebrate! In June, we “burned our mortgage” at the Capital Campaign Closeout Party at the Museum of Modern Art. For almost two years now, the Center has been incredibly busy with numerous exhibitions, and more than 1,200 programs and parties, conferences and ceremonies. We are grateful to all of our donors for helping us achieve our \$6 million capital campaign goal and supporting the creation of such a unique space for debate and exchange on current issues in architecture and design. Pictured: Capital Campaign Co-chair Gene Kohn, FAIA, greets the crowd of almost 1,500 at MoMA.

“Value Meal: Design and (over) Eating” featured 20 specially commissioned, experimental projects by leading U.S.-based designers exploring design’s potential to address the overweight epidemic. Pictured: “Wheel of Food Fortune” by David Rockwell.



ANNIE KURTJIN



TINA ERIKSSON

The Center’s first international exhibition, “Mexico City Dialogues: New Architectural Practices,” invited New Yorkers to meet a daring generation of young architects in Mexico City. The bilingual exhibition was curated by Jose Castillo and Alejandro Hernandez, with underwriting support from Mexico-based glass manufacturer Vitro.



KRISTEN RICHARDS

Celebrating the signing of a Regional Memorandum of Understanding promoting green buildings and sustainable living in New York and New Jersey (l-r): Bruce Turner, AIA, President, AIA New Jersey; Barbara Smith Mishara, AIA, President, AIA New York State; Susan Chin, FAIA, President, AIA New York Chapter; and Kathleen Callahan, EPA Acting Regional Administrator for District II.



AMY HITCHOFF

The Center for Architecture Foundation partnered with the Transit Museum, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, and the AIA NY Chapter Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to provide an after-school studio program. Pictured: Jeff Dugan, AIA, a principal at Dattner Architects, with his team from the Urban Assembly School for Design and Construction.



RICK BELL

“City Art: New York’s Percent for Art Program,” through September 3, features original photography and a multimedia installation highlighting close to 200 public art works across the five boroughs.

# So Says... Ronnette

KRISTEN RICHARDS



Ronnette Riley, FAIA, is not afraid of heights. She is one of a few women who individually own architecture firms in contemporary America. With degrees in architecture from Harvard and U.C. Berkeley, she honed her skills with firms in New York and California such as Peter Marino Architects, Voorsanger & Mills, Emilio Ambasz, Fisher-Friedman Associates, and Johnson/Burgee. Today, her staff of 15 works on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building, where Ronnette Riley Architect has perched since its founding in 1987. Riley recently took time out between client meetings, responsibilities as chairwoman of the National AIA Committee on Design, and preparing "Tower Tokens," a summer exhibition of Empire State Building souvenirs (much of it from her own extensive collection of building miniatures) to talk with *Oculus* about women in architecture, the business of architecture, and going cold turkey on celebrity.

**Kristen Richards:** Why don't more women own or run architectural firms?

**Ronnette Riley:** I ask people at colleges and universities to name five recognizable American women who don't practice with a male partner. No one can – including me. They can name 20 husband-wife firms, but not five women with national or international name recognition. Could it be that male clients do not go out of their comfort zone? I've been practicing 18 years, and now that my peer group and friends are working in positions that hire architects, things are starting to change. My staff is diverse. Mark Brungo, my Associate, is terrific and helps me with the firm and three women have leadership roles.

**KR** Where does it begin?

**RR** As a whole, there are many women in architecture schools now, but even in my office there are four women eligible to take the exam who have not. People do not see the cost benefit of being licensed. In 1983, less than 1% of licensed architects were women. Now there are 12%. I was recently at the University of Virginia and the school was 60% women. You want all those women to come through the profession. What's going to keep women in the field?

In New York City, 60 to 70% of your employees' salary goes for rent, and then you expect them to pay for the high exam fees? Owners of firms should pay for it – I do – that's good business.

**KR** Where did you get your start?

**RR** In San Francisco, with Fisher Friedman. It was a wonderful place to work. The pace was fast with residential cluster housing and mixed-use projects, so in a year and a half I'd worked on six or seven projects.

Working in San Francisco made me realize that most of the towers were designed out of New York; so I moved east. I came to New York to design skyscrapers. At first, I freelanced for a number of firms including Voorsanger & Mills and Peter Marino, and then went to Philip Johnson/John Burgee. It was a good fit.

Within a year I had my own project to run – the Lipstick Building. It was a start-and-stop project that took six years to finish. Philip Johnson's office was a great place to work. I was 27, 28 years old running a \$200 million project with no one looking over my shoulder. It was exciting.

There, I learned about firm and project management. My project manager's technique was to go to the front office, get a building, give the work to someone, and continually repeat this process so that he ran multiple projects simultaneously. He gave unlimited opportunity to our team. If we made a mistake he stood up and took all the bullets. Other project managers would get one project and micromanage the team and every building detail.

**KR** What was it like striking out on your own?

**RR** It was a bit of a shock: there was no one to run the prints, people weren't returning phone calls as frequently as when I worked under the umbrella of Philip Johnson, and about 25 days after moving into the Empire State Building, the stock market crashed.

# Riley, FAIA

**KR** Why is your office in the Empire State Building?

**RR** When I left Johnson/Burgee I wanted to work in Rockefeller Center, Chrysler Building, or Empire State Building. My first call was to the Empire State Building, and shortly thereafter the agent showed me the 83rd floor – which is above the office floors, in the attic. I said, “Fine, I’ll take it,” and never looked at any other space. Today, on the 80th floor, I am the highest tenant in New York.

**KR** Was Johnson supportive of you striking out on your own?

**RR** The day I agreed to take the space I went to Philip’s office and gave notice, and he said, “Oh, you’ll be working out of your house.” And I said, “No, no, I rented space.” He said, “Well, when I opened up my firm I worked out of my house.” And I said, “Well you had more than one room.” We had a big laugh about it. I said, “You’re the most famous architect. I had to be in the most famous building. I couldn’t just completely go cold turkey on celebrity.”

So both Philip Johnson and John Burgee were very supportive. They hired me to do independent projects for them my first year, let me use their library, and borrow their accountant to set up my books.

As professionals, we must make sure people start their own firm’s right – that they have the tools to properly engage in the architectural profession. Former employers passed work to me, and I now pass work along. It breeds better professionals – your craft is at stake.

**KR** Your thoughts on proper credit and attribution.

**RR** The National AIA Committee on Design was surprised to hear that the number one topic the Institute fields from AIA members is credit and attribution. The issue involves employee credit on projects, as an individual and a team member, and what happens when firms dissolve or close. Also, how the press and awards programs handle credit.

At many offices, when you no longer work there, your name is removed from the project record. That’s not right either – there is recognition and there is historical record.

Our office rule: Employees who work 80 hours on a project can say they worked on that project and they’re included in credit lists. Because the profession is changing, credit and attribution go hand in hand with rules of engagement for collaboration, and should be addressed up front.

**KR** Is the AIA Committee on Design going to come up with a standardized credit list format?

**RR** The committee is looking into developing guidelines to clarify the situation. We’d like to start with case studies of various collaborative permutations: Is star-star collaboration different than local architect and design architect? It’s too global a problem to be left up to individual interpretation. Standards are needed whenever you enter a relationship. Standards need to address more than credit attribution and should set a common understanding for how to play well together.

**KR** What’s ahead for the profession?

**RR** I want to take architecture to a more socially relevant level. It’s one of the reasons I was interested in architecture to begin with, but lost sight of it a little bit trying to pay off my student loans and make a living.

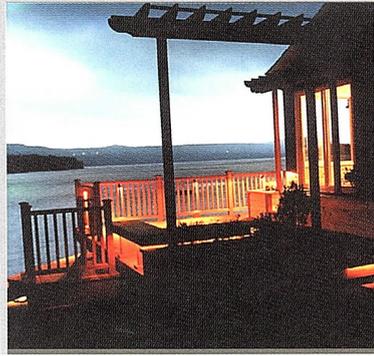
The younger generation now has more social awareness – a lot of things are growing up around this idea of giving back. The interest in sustainable design, refugee housing, Architecture for Humanity, and 1% Solution. One of the most rewarding projects we’ve done is a pro bono elementary school library for the Robin Hood Foundation.

**KR** What’s next for you?

**RR** I’ve just opened a second office in Bridgehampton, NY. It’s a one-woman office at the moment. You can do architecture from anywhere now with the Internet and electronic communication.

**KR** What do you do when you’re not doing architecture and collecting miniature buildings?

**RR** Let’s see, we do architecture 24 hours a day, and then there’s...



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## Landscape

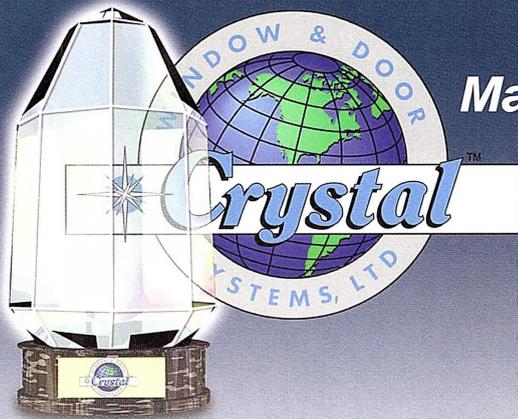
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# Not a shop for wallflowers

**Around the Corner**

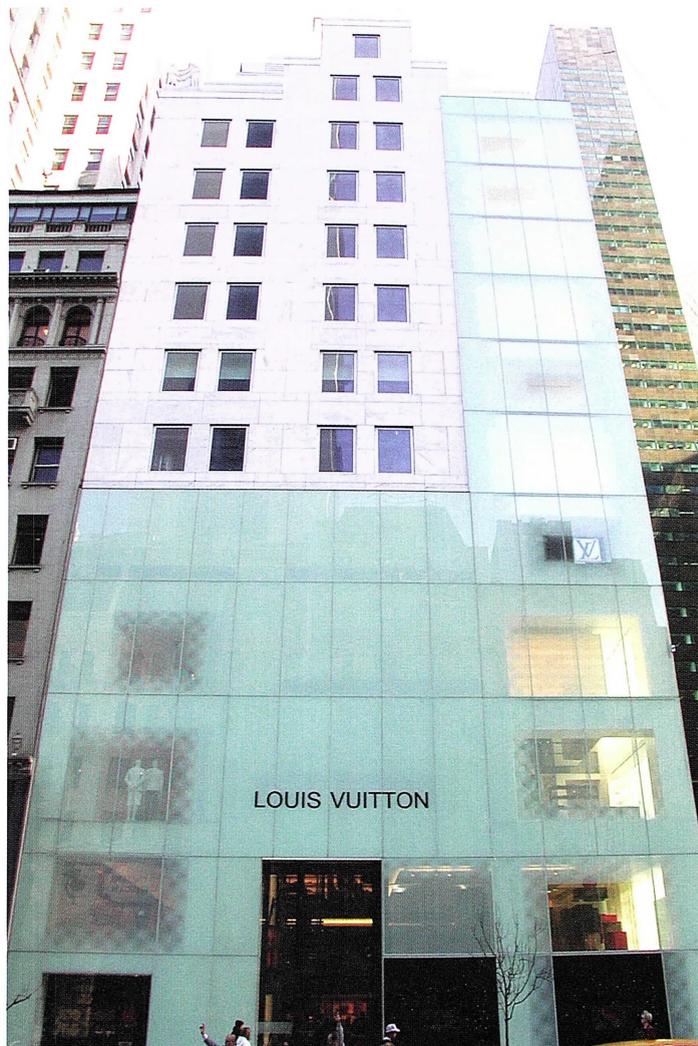
**Louis Vuitton New York One East by Jun Aoki and Peter Marino + Associates**

**By Eva Hagberg**

The Louis Vuitton flagship store, on the corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, is a little bit schizophrenic. Whether by purposeful design, or a result of the side effects of merging a staunch fashion house with a hot Japanese architect and a hip New York-based architect, the effect can be at times uplifting, at others off-putting.

There is an inkling of the dichotomy on the exterior, which was designed by Jun Aoki (who has designed a number of Louis Vuitton stores in Japan). A sans serif “Louis Vuitton” stands out from the checkerboard pattern that details the exterior, contrasting with the iconic (and more ornate) neighboring LV logo. The façade shape-shifts at different times of day and from different vantage points. From far away the pattern melts into a gauzy veil that from certain angles just looks bland and messy, while up close it begs to be more closely examined, the checkerboard squares clustering together, then spreading apart. It stands out on a walk down the street but lacks the eye-catching visibility of the neighboring Dior building.

Inside, five square pillars – one adorned with the dubious distinction of the world’s largest LED video screen that shows footage from the label’s runway shows – rise through the layered four-story space. Some contain vitrines alternately cool (metal and glass) and warm (leather and glass). “The store was based on the concepts of travel and space,” comments architect Peter Marino, AIA, who designed the interiors. The centerpiece, a gigantic LED-lit wall of translucent squares, some extruded, some receded, cycles through an enormous number of different colors every few minutes, and, according to the architect, “visually connects all four floors of the store for the cus-



KRISTEN RICHARDS



JIMMY COHRSEN

**Stairs hug the luminescent wall**

tomers.” Wide stairs hug the luminescent wall, with the sometimes unwelcome side effect that everyone who watches the wall is also watching you. This is not a shop for wallflowers.

Patches of the interior, warmly carpeted in beige and walled in pale, checkerboard, and frescoed materials, invite the visitor to sit

**Louis Vuitton New York One East**

down on square ottomans and, if they are daring, pick up a few of the colorful shoes on display. Other areas are cooler, particularly the second-floor jewelry section, which is lined in a dark burgundy that from a distance looks almost like polished charcoal. On the third floor, the men’s shoe wall is marked by a parasitic green cut-out panel, repeated (in purple) on the cozier women’s floor above. The constant shift between warm and cool, inviting and austere, seems to follow the shift between masculine and feminine areas of the store, the one giving way to the other only to wrest dominance back a moment – and a step – later.

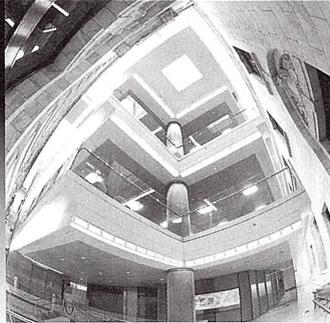
Mirrors reign supreme, alternately walling entire doors and jumping out in small rectangles, and reflected on a recent morning yours truly, shopping-happy tourists, and one confused puppy. The upside of the hard-to-pin-down design? We were all entertained.

Eva Hagberg is a New York-based freelancer who contributes regularly to *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *Metropolis*, and the *New York Times*.

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# Challenges in Today's Practice: A Roundtable

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Architectural practice these days is marked by tumult and the collision of many often incompatible concerns. To help *Oculus* get a handle on those concerns, the AIA NY Chapter Practice Committee hosted a roundtable in May that frames the articles that follow.

The co-chairs, Ann Rolland, AIA, Fox & Fowle, and Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, Teambuilders, organized the event and acted as facilitators.

#### Roundtable participants:

Mary Dietz, AIA, Perkins & Will; Elyse Engelhardt, AP3D Consulting; Annamarie Kovacic, Ibex Construction; Howard Kronland, AIA, Wank Adams Slavin Associates; Alan Marlis, CUNY; Burton Roslyn, AIA; Edward T. Shiffer, AIA, ISDP; Stanley Stark, FAIA, HLW; and Susan Wright, AIA, Gruzen Samton.

Here's what participants agreed were major challenges facing the business of architecture today:

- adjusting to a wider range of client expectations;
- getting owners to understand the value of design;
- dealing with expectations of faster schedule and higher quality;
- "stepping up" to acceptance of the greater risk that accompanies a leadership role.

Here are the highlights.

#### **Expectations of Perfection: the "Myth of Quality"**

The quality of architects' documents has suffered because of the accelerated schedules of projects, the downward competitive pressures on fees, and unrealistic client expectations of perfection.

The myth is that we are or can be perfect as architects. The reality is that, except in extraordinary circumstances, we cannot.

A curious parallel to this discussion is a book about the practice of medicine called *Complications*, by Dr. Atul Gawande. Mistakes are the norm in the medical profession; they're not an aberration.

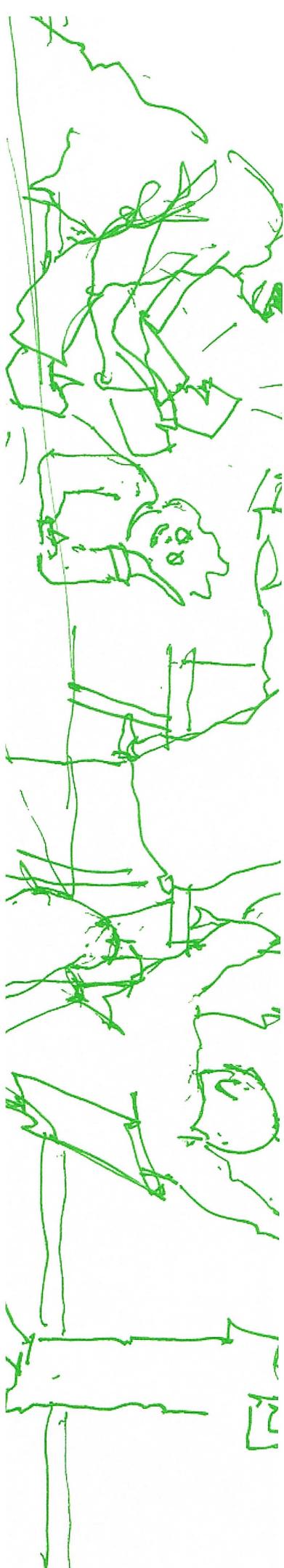
The most important thing about an error is what you do afterwards: cover it up or acknowledge it, learn from it, and work to correct it.

The expectation of perfection by owners may be a symptom of a wholesale shift of responsibilities, hence risk from the owner to the architect and contractor. This shift is reflected in "very nasty" contractual terms and conditions in several recent contracts that we've seen.

#### **Risk and Responsibility**

There is an intimate connection between risk and responsibility. The roundtable believed that the profession has shied away from responsibility as a first defense to avoid risk. The result appears to have had the opposite effect. Reducing responsibilities marginalizes the architect's role on the project, in some cases actually creating added risk.

It is ironic to see the owner's dissatisfaction with the quality of our work. The dissatisfaction may be a result of a selection process



based on the lowest fees and the shortest timeframes...so short that we can't really do the type of quality design, quality investigation, and quality documentation that the owner actually needs and deserves. By abdicating our primary role, by stepping back and accepting lower fees in return for less liability, we find ourselves in a secondary position where our opinions aren't respected. Clients see us as followers, not doers.

We must be prepared as a profession to step up to the table and reclaim a leadership role. Unless we are prepared to be more assertive, our services will not be fairly valued.

### **Design-build**

The roundtable fell short of a consensus on the value of design-build as a form of project delivery.

Part of the reason that the current design-build configuration is so onerous may be that we have abdicated too much control of the process. If the architect were the prime on a design-build project, and started taking responsibility for construction quality as well as design, clients might be better served, and architects would fulfill a more satisfying role.

the "star" with a building type specialist.

If you're an architect just getting started in practice today, do you market your services to clients as a specialist in a particular building type? Unless you have the good fortune to be recognized as a "star" your chances of landing a high profile project on your own is unlikely.

Having two architects on a project has, in some cases, led to "watering down" the quality of what we do, due to compromises made necessary to achieve consensus.

There are clients who believe that "combining the best with the best, they will end up with the best." These often end up being unrealistic expectations where the reality is a "forced marriage" of two firms that may be organizationally incapable of producing a project of the quality level expected, on the tight budget and schedule that the client requires.

### **Technology**

Technology has not evolved as the elixir of success for architects, or for anyone else. But it helps.

We all think technology should be making us faster and better and our jobs more boring. But it's not – at least not for me.

Unless we are prepared to be more assertive, our services will not be fairly valued.

There are a few recent examples of successful contractor-led design-build teams. These were marked by a strong collaborative relationship between the architect and contractor. In some cases this was due to an ongoing working relationship on multiple projects between team members. In other cases, the "partnering" process was used to foster teamwork.

### **Generalists vs. Specialists**

The group took up tensions between being a generalist or a specialist, a "star" or part of the supporting cast.

The architect had always been known as the generalist. But the world has changed. Everybody wants a specialist now – someone who has 25, 30 years of experience doing a particular thing; you can't be a generalist anymore.

Every time I submit a proposal I'm told: I don't care about the pictures. I want to see the project manager's experience. How many years has he/she been doing hospital design and the type of work that I want for my project?

There's an exception to this trend toward specialization. It's related to what we have begun to call architectural design "stars." Their design abilities are valued so highly that some clients believe that project specific expertise is not needed. A more common model however, pairs

Technology has definitely changed how we practice, but it's not become our friend yet.

In part it's because we don't have the time to use it to our advantage. When you think about it, drawing is thinking for architects. It's a form of problem solving. You actually solve problems tactilely, on paper. Perhaps computers will get to the point where you can really use them intuitively, but even if they do, you'll still really be pulling things from the sell library.

One of the most important advantages of computer technology is that it has made it possible for firms and teams separated by long distances to collaborate seamlessly.

### **Offshoring**

A new horizon, about which the group was uncertain.

One reason firms offshore is to get a jump on time. They can get a day and literally cheat the clock. The client wants it faster, we'll do it faster, we'll do it a whole day earlier. And we'll use folks who may or may not know how we practice. We're assured that there's no quality sacrificed. I'm not convinced.

I'm not convinced either, based on what I've seen. But what's being lost is the whole idea of developmental time, the iterative time, the actual problem solving time.

## Education

Concerns about what the architectural educational process is producing.

We're seeing juniors right out of school with fantastic computer skills and graphic skills, but not well honed in architectural skills. The whole process of developing a concept is starting to get lost.

Education has shifted more toward development of the technological aspect of practice rather than toward development of analytical skills.

Some practitioners feel more comfortable seeing a series of vignettes on yellow trace like in the old days. They want to see the thinking process, but for many students, it seems to be a lost art.

There's a kind of ecosystem that used to exist in most firms. You'd come in, you would draw, you'd visit an existing building and do measured drawings. It was a slow, gradual pace where juniors were mentored. It is now increasingly difficult to develop younger staff, given the compressed timeframes that have become the norm. Today, juniors come in and within six months they're project managers.

## Improving Collaboration between Architects and Engineers

The group urged closer connections with their engineering consultants.

Are architects going to take the time and trouble to learn what their engineers are doing? If not, they're not going to be able to effectively manage the process. How architects work with consultants has to improve, particularly with today's more complex building systems and more aggressive schedules that require a higher degree of coordination and expertise.

What makes the architect's contribution so valuable to owners is their overview, and their ability to lead.

Closer collaboration with engineers is really an argument in favor of a more fully integrated team from front end to back of the entire process.

## Timeframes

Project timeframes are a fundamental condition of project success.

Timeframes are shrinking for developing projects. Technology has created the belief that things can be faster without sacrificing quality. This is mistaken. The time to develop a project properly is essential to its successful delivery.

The reality is that clients want it faster, they want it for less money, and they're starting construction before the design is finished. At some point something has to give.



STANLEY STARK

# Stars vs.

## The Polarization of the



STANLEY STARK

The architectural profession seems to be in a period of transition where architects and firms are being sorted into two categories: stars and service providers. As the values of an entertainment-based, celebrity-driven popular culture pervade every aspect of economic, political, cultural, and social life, it is not surprising that the star system has expanded into architecture and taken center stage. But something is amiss.

The profession is becoming polarized. On one side are those perceived to be stars, on the other those who aren't. The sense of a professional spectrum is disappearing. It used to span from general practitioners, to specialists, to broadly based firms that balance good design with expertise and extensive service, to prominent architects (i.e. famous in their fields), to a high caste of design mandarins who were the stars and the most visible faces of the profession. Instead, the design community is stratifying at an alarming rate. At one end are omnipotent and omniscient stars, at the other are small general practitioners and specialists. In the diminishing middle are the more broadly based firms struggling to preserve their identities and their balance while shouldering enormous burdens of risk. The diversity we prize so highly elsewhere in the social system is draining out of architecture. The professional ecosystem is shrinking.

This degree of separation seems to be particularly strong in the institutional, academic, and, recently, government facilities community. Developers, who always seemed to have their favorite architects whether or not they were stars, have adopted the star system with a vengeance (e.g. the dueling designer towers along West Street). Members of the corporate facilities community, except in the case of headquarters structures, have always shunned the power of star design architects. They tended to be fearful that the corporate mission would be submerged by the designer's agenda. Nevertheless, they too have at times shown an appetite for celebrity designer status (e.g. the New York Times HQ, and the new Hearst HQ).

# Commodities

## Architectural Profession

The drive toward an ever-expanding celebrity class of architects has been relatively sudden. There were always stars but there weren't as many. When I entered school in 1965, Mies, Gropius, Belluschi, Tange, Bunshaft of SOM, Saarinen, and the emerging I.M. Pei were the reigning Olympians. Corbu had just died. *Architectural Digest's* typecasting of star designers for public consumption, and popular culture's relentless drive from the 1960s onward toward instant and short lifespan glorification – superstar chefs, brokers, models – helped create the appetite and set the stage for this increasingly stratified design community.

Five major events and phenomena seem to have accelerated this shift in mindset:

- GSA's Design Excellence Program, a highly exclusionary and self-referential form of selection, made high design by high design architects a prerequisite for public development policy. GSA led the pack to go out and get "the best." But are they? Is the premium paid truly worth it?
- Guggenheim Bilbao, Gehry's tour-de-force, captured the public imagination about the possibilities for architecture in a way no major building has in over a generation. It also raised the bar on both the visible results and on the claims made on behalf of design.
- The trauma of 9/11 created a wound that the public came to believe – and indeed was encouraged to believe – could be salvaged by spectacular and compelling designs created by visionary designers. No matter what the outcome, the events justified design to a wide public audience.
- Institutional patronage at universities, medical schools, performing arts complexes, and museums, funded by the flow of new money in the late 1990s, has become a flood expanding and empowering a growing stable of architectural celebrities.

- Finally, as the economy and popular culture globalizes, so does the design community. As institutions, particularly universities, assert a global presence, they have begun to look beyond familiar design-service providers to a more diverse global design community. It is this appetite for global reach that has drawn a number of theoretically-based architects into real practice and delivery.

There's grumbling. Premiums are being paid to engage stars to simply sit at meetings. Egos need to be nurtured. Some star primas can't actually prepare the working drawings and need assistance. The marriages of convenience that are being used to bridge the gaps are inequitable, and many are probably unsatisfying. There's been some real warping of the process. It is the public and the end users who will lose.

So, are stratification and its consequences permanent new features of the design environment? Or is it a pendulum swing that will go too far, then self-correct and return to an acceptable median? And in the process are we losing something vital and valuable? Careers, self-beliefs, and a lot of self-esteem hang precariously in the balance.

Stanley Stark, FAIA, is a Managing Partner at HLW International LLP. He is one of the leaders of the firm's Science and Technology Facilities practice.

Note: My thanks to John Hlafter, FAIA, University Architect at Princeton University; Frances Huppert, FAIA, V.P. of Design at Empire State Development Corporation; Steven Mongiardo, Senior Director, Corporate Engineering, Merck & Company, Inc., for their feedback and comments.

How architects can use design-build to regain control of the design process-if they'll grab it.  
By Roger Yee

# Build This If You Can

PETER L. GLUCK



PETER PAIGE



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**HLW: Olympus Industrial America U.S. Corporate Headquarters, Orangeburg, NY**  
**Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners: The Prince George Ballroom, New York, NY**  
**Panero Zelnik Associates: Yankee Barn Development, Ulster County, NY**

Somebody must have whispered to Hollywood about one of architecture's best-kept secrets – the schism between architects and builders – over a half-century ago. How else can you explain “Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House,” a 1948 comedy about the misadventures of an affluent New York family, its architect, and contractors, who create a charming suburban residence where windows don't open, plumbing won't work, and a stubborn closet door traps the architect inside? More than 50 years later architect Peter Gluck, a partner of Peter L. Gluck & Partners, declares: “The traditional design-bid-build system is broken down, and everyone knows it.”

Design-bid-build faces a two-fold problem, believes Gluck, whose firm provides design-build services through construction management. First, although the architect once relied on tradesmen to execute his vision, this relationship has unraveled with the appearance of new systems, materials, and methods that require detailed instructions the architect is unequipped to furnish. Second, the architect pays dearly for exiting the construction process to shed liability, because his limited involvement in construction leads to a loss of control over the results. To make better buildings that cost less, Gluck believes the architect should be a design-builder, a professional who assumes responsibility for both design and construction.

He isn't alone in calling for design-build to replace the standard linear process. The Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA), an organization founded in 1993 to advance single-source project delivery, extols the virtues of design decisions that proceed integrally with construction factors, overcoming architects' ignorance about construction, and contractors' indifference to quality. As design-builders, architects consult with contractors as they develop designs for specification and bidding, seeking “constructability” and affordability as well as good design.

Owners increasingly prefer design-build projects, which account for some 40% of the current construction market. Not only does design-build offer a clear line of authority for project control, reduce conflict among team members, and minimize change orders, it improves quality while saving time and cost. For architects, the big question mark obscuring design-build is their place in the process. How does design-build affect architectural practice?

### Is this going to hurt?

While design-build can transform architectural practice, Carlos Cardoso, AIA, an associate partner of Beyer Blinder Belle and the son of a family of builders, reassures fellow architects the rewards are worth the effort. “It's a different way of working, with information flowing back and forth between the design studio and the job site,” he admits. “The process begins when the builders are in your office, advising you on what works best for your design. Then you go out into the field to supervise the construction, consulting with the builders to get the best value for the owner.”

For Cardoso and his colleagues, who deliver design-build services as construction managers, the advantages are compelling. “If architects want more control of design, they must understand construction,” he says. “Design-build lets them offer clients more and better products. When clients realize that architects know how a build-

ing comes together, they will reward them with greater respect, responsibility, and income. Design-build brings us full circle to Brunelleschi.”

Of course, some architects are better prepared than others for design-build, as Harold L. Adams, FAIA, chairman emeritus of RTKL and national chairman of the DBIA, notes. “We're educated to avoid risk, and we receive little instruction in business, so we have a great deal to learn,” he cautions. “I would urge architects to enter into joint ventures with contractors, forming limited liability corporations and taking as much ownership as the risk they're willing to assume. By taking at least a few percentage points, they can sit at the table and learn how construction really works.”

Putting architects in charge of design-build – instead of others vying for the honor – makes sense for Vivian Chavez, president of HLW Design/Build, where “design-led design-build” is provided to clients independent of the architect's role. “We run an independent organization focused on maximizing the value of a facilities project with a distinct focus on design integrity,” she explains. “We provide design via HLW, and construction through a qualified contractor, but we take responsibility for a project's time and cost. We believe good design is good for business and can be cost effective.” Adds Ted Hammer, AIA, senior managing partner of HLW, “Why shouldn't architects take the lead? We're trained as problem solvers, accustomed to team work, and comfortable with creative conflict.”

### Should you get involved?

What holds architects back from design-build services? “Aside from fear of construction, many architects strictly want to design,” says Cardoso. “They don't want to get involved with nuts and bolts.” He concedes that legal liability continues to haunt fellow architects.

Legal liability for design-build is obviously worth examining. To quote attorney Matt Quinn, a partner of Zetlin & De Chiara, “In terms of areas of legal liability, traditionally, the architect has been obligated to submit plans and specifications that comply with established standards of care. A design-build entity is typically required to assure that the project meets the owner's expectations. The architect involved in design-build can no longer say to the owner, ‘It's a construction problem.’ He should draw up explicit agreements for a joint-venture with the builder that provide some protection from each other's errors.”

If Gluck's practice is any indication, the legal risks are not unreasonable. “My insurance company is delighted that I have more control and fewer problems,” he reports. Equally important, his staff clearly enjoys being involved in construction.

Many young architects say design-build introduces exciting opportunities to expand experience, skills, and careers. For example, Bryan Zelnik, an associate of Panero Zelnik Associates who has worked in construction as well as design, hopes to combine design-build with real estate development. “Design-build should give us more control over our design,” he observes. “Who doesn't want that?”

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

Of all the transitions that architecture practices go through, succession planning is probably the most complex. Virtually every aspect of practice comes up for examination, from identity and reputation to compensation and leadership.

Multigenerational firms such as HLW, which is over 100 years old, SOM, and HOK already have leadership transitions as part of their business culture, so the handing over of reins is relatively smooth. But many New York offices both large and small are going through the process for the first time. And they are experiencing just how daunting it can be.

Ros Brandt of Brandt Resources, who consults on marketing and firm transitions in the A/E/C industry says, "Successful transitions require time, preferably at least 10 years. It takes that long to select and groom the next generation of leaders and to structure and phase a buyout that's manageable for those acquiring equity in the firm." And this comes after the principals' initial evaluation of whether they want a succession.

For Richard Gluckman, FAIA, of Gluckman Mayner Architects, the decision wasn't that difficult. "We have a group of incredibly talented and committed individuals who've actively contributed to the firm in every aspect of our operations. While we don't have a plan yet in place, we will be looking at how a succession could happen." Indeed, the bond between a firm's founding principals and their longtime senior staff is a primary motivating factor, along with realizing equity, for successions.

But who should be the next generation of firm leaders? Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, president of Teambuilders, Inc., a management consulting firm, warns against confusing those who should lead the firm with those who have made important contributions to the office. "A great designer or project manager isn't necessarily a great leader, and

without good leadership a succession will fail. This is a process where egos can get easily bruised, so you still have to find a way to reward the important individuals who won't have a management position."

### Identify Potential

Cooper Robertson, which is five years into its succession process, made a concerted effort to identify and keep staff with leadership potential. Comments Karen Cooper, "We didn't expect to find a single person who had it all, but we did find a group whose combined skills and energy have already helped to propel the firm forward. And we're continuing the process to identify who will be the generation of leaders after them. We don't want valuable talent to get lost." At HLW, as soon as a managing partner is named, he or she is advised to start looking for their successor. Managing Partner Stanley Stark, FAIA, asserts, "As soon as you get power, you have to start giving it away. But you have to do it in a controlled way, so that younger staff doesn't get intimidated by too much responsibility too soon."

Succession plans at smaller firms have the benefit of being that much simpler. Michael Szerbaty, AIA, Principal of Beckhard Richland Szerbaty, says it was evident fairly early in the game that he was on a principal track. He was gradually given responsibilities that would build his confidence and leadership skills. His succession was underway when Beckhard and Richland died unexpectedly within a week of one another. Nearly a year later, Szerbaty feels he now has the firm well in hand.

Steinglass advises that in a smooth succession, both leadership and ownership transitions should occur at the same time. "They are parallel processes and each reinforces the other. It's difficult to ask people to take on leadership responsibilities without the rewards of ownership. At the same time, offering ownership without leadership can delay an important learning process and demoralize those who should be engaged."

But where do incoming partners, most of who live on an architect's salary, get the wherewithal to purchase ownership shares? Michael De Chiara, a partner in the law firm Zetlin & De Chiara, says that many firms in effect subsidize the buy-in by offering bonuses and raises that go toward owning shares in the firm. And he has found that they require a lot of personal attention. "These are deeply personal decisions that are being made. Most designers think conceptually and so I have to make them comfortable with the legal language and concepts of these agreements. I want to make sure they understand the obligations and implications of what they're agreeing to."

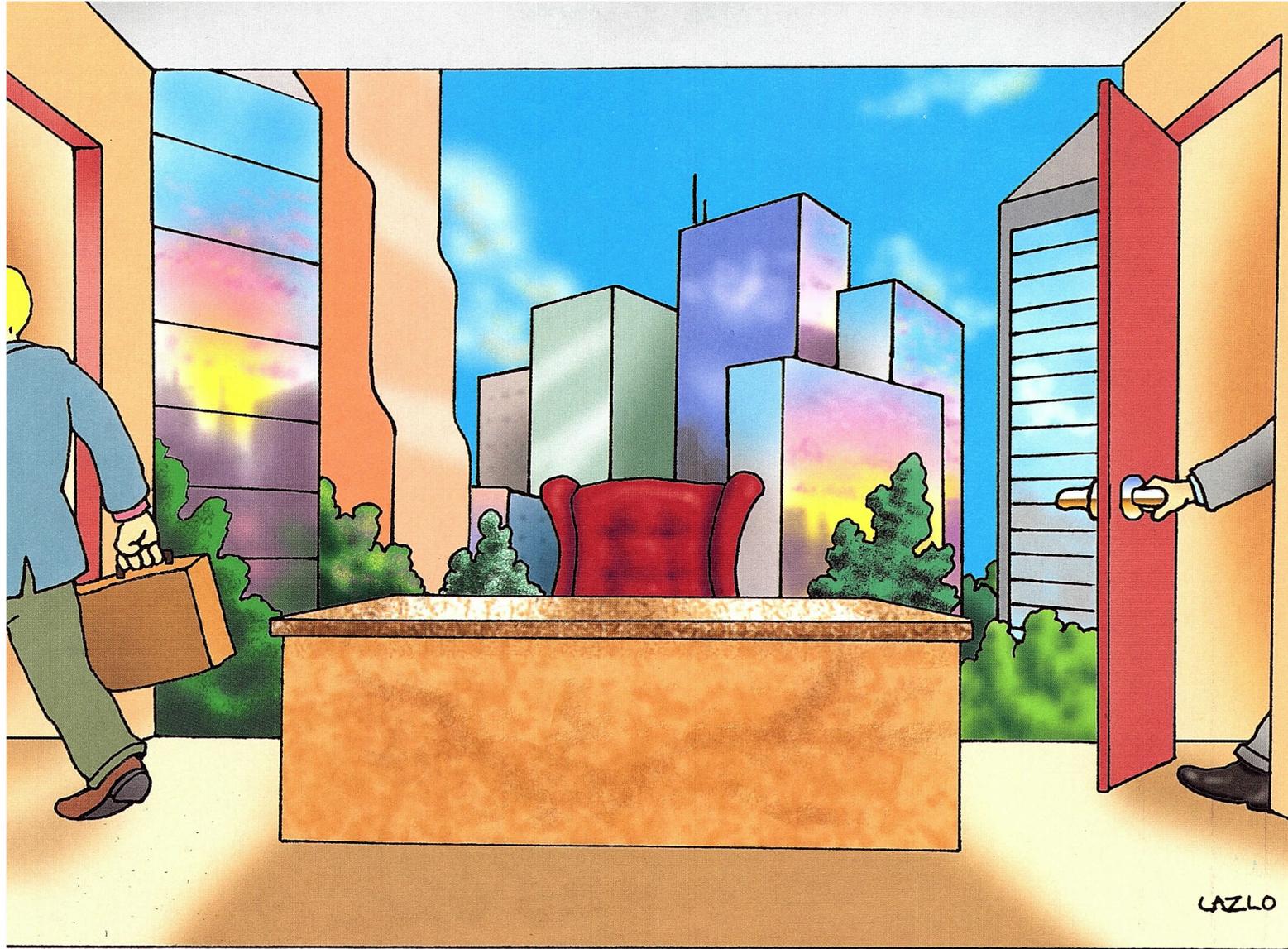
### 2nd Generation's Vision

Invariably, first generation firms are molded around the vision, strengths, and energy of their founders. Each firm is an expression of the partners' design values and management style. All of that comes up for examination during the initial phase of succession planning. When Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer looked at how to pass the firm on to the next generation, the partners gradually realized their firm had in fact evolved into three distinct entities operating under one name, with each partner developing his own design identity and key staff. Trying to create a unified succession for a firm with such different cultures didn't make sense, and the partners split amicably. Each firm is in turn creating its own succession plan.

# 2nd Act

Founding principals thinking about succession find good planning makes all the difference.

By Richard Staub



LAZLO

Some firms are formed purely to express the founder's design vision. It's difficult to imagine an office such as Eisenman Architects, whose practice is built so completely on the critical investigations of Peter Eisenman, FAIA, having a succession. Jim Garrison, AIA, founder of Garrison Architects and a former partner of Polshek Partnership, says, "What's at the soul of the profession are personal vision and service. If personal expression gets lost, as I think it does when the next generation of designers takes over the firm, then what's the point?"

Second generation partners at other firms suggest, however, that a firm's culture and approach to service permeate through the various levels of management and design staff, assuring at least a continuity of brand. Daniel Kaplan, AIA, the most senior of the next generation of partners at Fox & Fowle, says, "Bruce Fowle has created a culture of design and innovation that lots of people can plug into with their various strengths. His vision is to elevate craft, which comes from a collective, and up the ante."

Of course, founding principals don't fade away as the transition takes place, nor should anyone want them to. Says Brandt, "The partners' relationships with clients are probably a firm's single most important asset, aside from their staff. The handing off of clients to the next generation should be phased so the client can gradually get to know and become comfortable with the new leaders." A poorly sequenced hand-off will send the harmful signals about the management of the firm and the value of the client.

### Letting Go

Certainly the process of relinquishing one's creation can involve delicate maneuvering between generations, with the younger leaders eager to take charge and the older ones reluctant to let go. Says De Chiara, "Usually, it isn't the management of the firm that's hard to give up; it's design leadership."

Many of the architects who are handing off their firms aren't about to actually retire. While they give up a controlling interest, they often want to remain involved in projects with the luxury of being free of management responsibilities. Even at more corporate firms such as HOK, which has a mandatory retirement age of 62, when partners give up their shares they have the option of continuing to practice as part of the staff.

Firm successions are another indication of how much architecture practices have adopted a more business-like model. The traditional practice of adding and subtracting names as partners change is being discarded in favor of a fixed name for the sake of brand continuity. And the recognition that well run firms take on an organic life almost apart from their founders suggests that, with a well planned succession, many practices can have a viable future for generations to come.

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

# Mentoring: The key to growing leaders from within

**M**entoring has emerged as a process for firms to grow leaders. Firms often ask “how can we keep our most talented people,” and “how do we develop leadership skills from within our firm?” The problems of staff retention and career development are often related, although seldom connected in a single leadership development strategy.

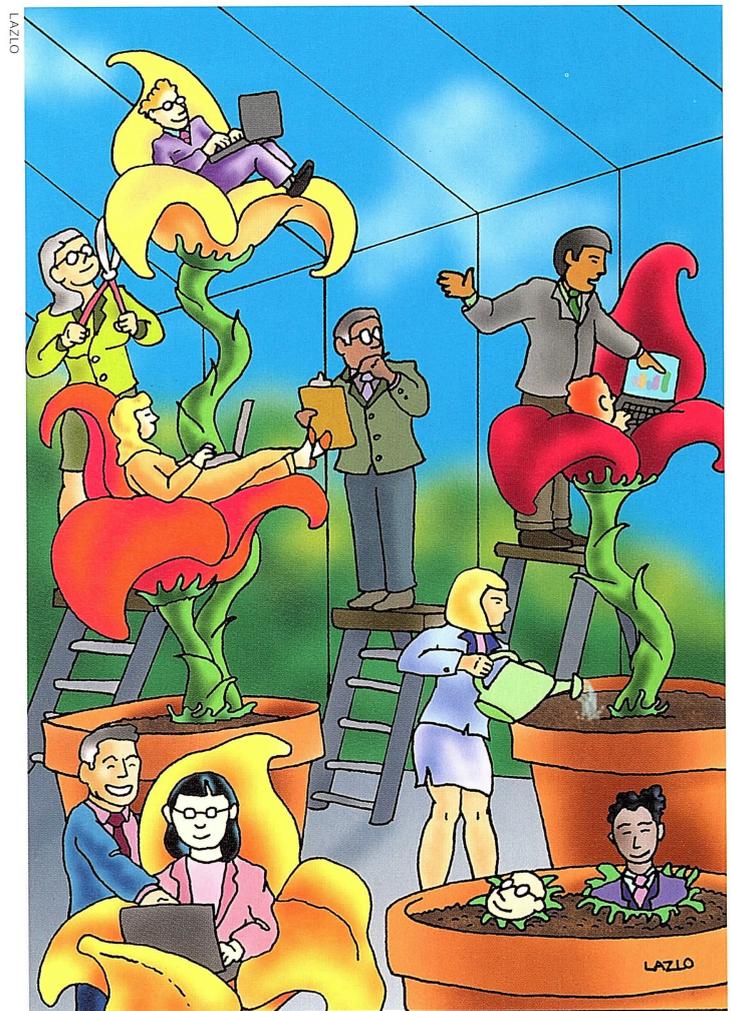
In many architectural and engineering firms that have been serious about training, there is a general acceptance that “experiential learning” – learning by doing – ends up being the most effective approach. In medicine, learning through the experience of doing is fundamental, and it poses risks. The safety net is the degree of supervision that is provided. But the trick in practice is to give the young professional progressive responsibilities and authority to provide a meaningful learning experience, without losing the patient (or client).

Some firms combine mentoring from a more experienced professional within the firm with supervision from the project manager, who is in a position to delegate progressively and monitor the results. These firms recognize that the project manager, in the role of mentor, is in the best position to support the development of staff.

In fact, the role of the project manager has been changing in many firms. As projects become more complex and experienced staff more scarce, project managers are expected to do more than just manage. They are also responsible for much of the “heavy lifting” – providing the technical expertise as well as the hands-on labor – to produce the documents and oversee the projects in construction, often with little experienced help. In recent years, firms have begun to realize that one of the most important roles of the project manager is as an “on-board” trainer, or “mentor” to the young, inexperienced staff who work on such projects. Project managers in these firms may now be evaluated not only on the profitability of their projects and satisfaction of their clients, but also on their skills as mentors to the staff assigned to them.

The key to this transformation may very well be found at the principal level. The learning process (or un-learning, in the case of managers who are overly controlling) can be difficult. The concept of “experiential learning” for industries that have been successful in training is regarded as the most effective learning method, and is based on the premise that one learns from one’s own mistakes.

Without the support of the principal-in-charge, the young manager-in-training will not survive his or her first blunders. The result will be that they will learn to play it safe whenever they encounter a risky situation or a confrontational client. When young architects are given the support that mentoring can offer, however, the firms they learn from are often the firms they build their careers around. The firms that are able to provide the nurturing and support are the firms that are able to grow leaders from within.



Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, founder of Teambuilders, Inc, a New York-based organizational development consultant, has been helping design firms develop and implement leadership transition plans. He is also the co-chair of the AIA NY Chapter Professional Practice Committee.

# An Uneasy Alliance

## Architecture as art and business

The art and business of architecture have never been comfortable bedfellows. The purity, and therefore quality, of the first seems tainted by the hustling nature of the second. While the poet can scratch away on a napkin with a 99-cent pen, the architect cannot. The divide between work-a-day business and the quality of design is one of architecture's greatest challenges.

As architecture moved from the building site to an increasingly artistic and intellectual arena, a rich discourse has, over the centuries, evolved into numerous architectural theories. Academia and public review scrutinize the relationship of the drawn work to its stated philosophy. Such elaborate discussions are lively interchanges, and hold potential for growth and development, yet they may sometimes mask the reality that while the mind and soul of architecture are artistic, at its heart it remains a business.

Theoretical and artistic development is the entirety of the architect's education and professional training, and young architects are encouraged to enter competitions to prove the artistic and theoretical merit of their work. The implicit message to those new to the profession is that talent is itself a magnet for work. Yet, there is no shortage of architects who have failed to achieve a level of success commensurate with their talent. The truly successful architect possesses, along with professional abilities and talents, ample interpersonal, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills.

Frank Lloyd Wright's design excellence is often credited as the reason for his professional success. Wright also possessed consummate marketing ability and business acumen. He exhibited extraordinary personal charm in securing clients and keeping them as close friends and sources of referrals.

Identifying and pursuing clients, securing and managing commissions: it is not enough for young architects to know they need these skills – we must teach them how.

The myth of the rogue architect is neither accurate nor helpful to fledgling architects. Arguably, the myth of the architect as a rugged individual severely limits the growth of an essential set of skills. Rather than imagining our great architects as lone guns, we benefit from examining how architectural talent and vision is organized around complex relationships with clients, related professionals, and markets, and how strategic alliances are essential to realizing commissions in a highly competitive marketplace.

Architects invested in the pursuit of quality and integrity require an equally strong commitment to the interpersonal and business realms. While basic business skills afford the architect greater freedom, our current architectural education does not adequately address the interpersonal and financial skills necessary for running a high quality design practice – this often thwarts the ability of new firms and single practitioners to produce exceptional work.

Identifying and pursuing clients, securing and managing commissions: it is not enough for young architects to know they need these skills – we must teach them how. The curricular objectives for students of architecture must include a wider set of skills. For architects at the beginning of their careers to be without these skills is to be at the mercy of incomprehensible market forces, which result in powerlessness and inferior work for the sake of staying solvent.

Moreover, those uninitiated in the business of architecture and the art of relationships with clients are only left with the mythic status of the rogue architect, despite talent and motivation to succeed. No one will argue that design quality makes a successful architect, but all too often architectural education disregards the simple truth that architecture is an art form and a profession. Business is at the heart of architecture, and is necessary for success. It is time for the profession to let us all get to the real business at hand: creating the next generation of brilliant and successful architects.

George Ranalli is an architect and Dean of the School of Architecture, Urban Design & Landscape Architecture, City College, City University of New York.

# Voices of the

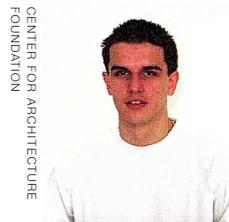
**Nestled among apartment buildings, brownstones, bodegas, retail stores, and the general muddle of the urban landscape are the public schools of New York City. As architecture, design, and the built environment receive more attention in the public realm, our schools, too, are embracing architecture as vehicles for fostering knowledge of the city. This in turn is producing more students who go on to study architecture in college. Amy Hitchcock and Jessica Kemper, who run the K-12 programs for the Center for Architecture Foundation, interviewed four high school students majoring in architecture and selected by their teachers as the names to watch for in the future.**



**Brooke Clare**



**Tim Cox**

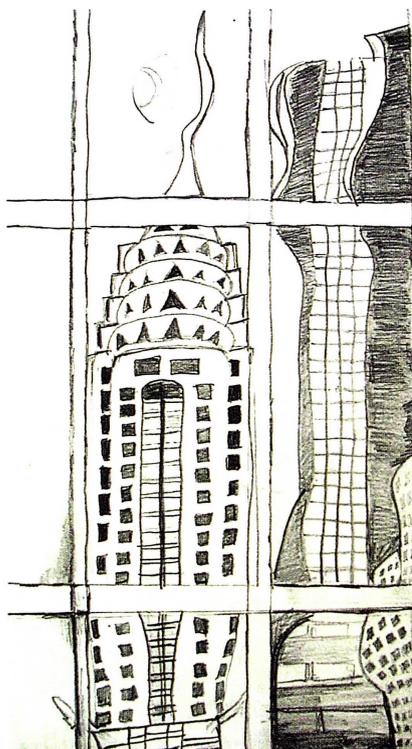


**Mario Mohan**



**Michael Nartey**

**Name:** Brooke Clare  
**Age:** 15  
**Grade:** 9  
**Where did you grow up:** Brooklyn, NY  
**School:** Williamsburg High School for Architecture & Design  
**Hobbies:** Reading, tutoring, and sketching on the subway.  
**How did you discover architecture?**  
 My mom. I used to doodle a lot and I would say to my mom, "One day I am going to build you a nice house." And she would say, "So, you want to be an architect?" I thought, "What is that?" Also, my seventh grade



**Brook Clare's rendering of her favorite NYC building**

math teacher gave me a book on architecture with images of landscape architecture, Palladio's villas and cathedrals. I really loved that book. I was intrigued by it.

**What fascinates you about architecture?**

I like thinking about the form and function of a building. When you have a beautiful design that works, it does what the building is supposed to do. To have both [form and function] in combination fascinates me.

**What is your favorite building?**

The Chrysler Building. It is the first building I ever sketched. I learned more about it in architecture class this year and I didn't know it was made out of car parts.

**If you could have your dream design built right now, what would it look like?**

I came up with a four-leaf clover idea where the four parts connect in a center core. I want it to rotate with the sun.

**Name:** Tim Cox

**Age:** 15

**Grade:** 9

**Where did you grow up:** Brooklyn, NY

**School:** Williamsburg High School for Architecture & Design

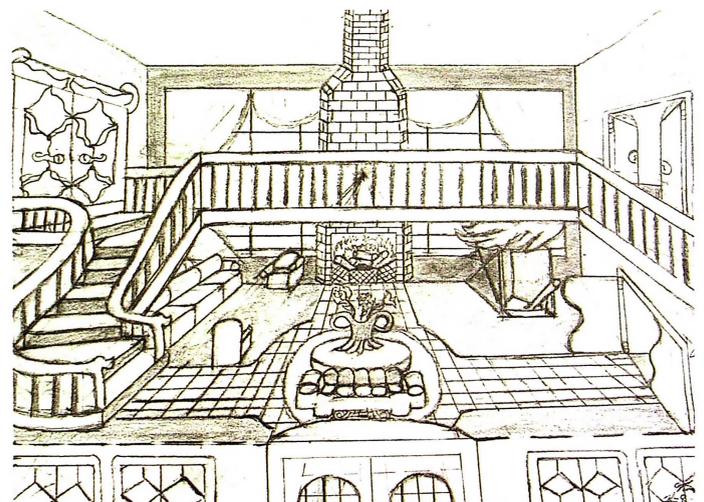
**Hobbies:** Sports, writing poems, and eating once in a while. And, of course, drawing.

**How did you discover architecture?**

It started from playing with Legos actually. I still have designs at home that I built. I used to piece things together and build something better than I saw on the box.

**Where do you look for inspiration?**

I look for different ideas in all kinds of buildings and architects' work. I take ideas that I like and put them in my own perspective to make something new.



**Tim Cox's proposal for a residential interior**

# Future

**Four high school students  
majoring in architecture**

If you could have your dream design built right now, what would it look like?

I like the idea of mixing Chinese architecture and Greek architecture.

**What is an achievement that you are proud of?**

I participate in my school's after-school program, where Pratt students teach us different ways to think about architecture...how to look at our designs from different perspectives. We are learning how to express forms with clay models.

**Name:** Mario Mohan

**Age:** 18

**Grade:** 12

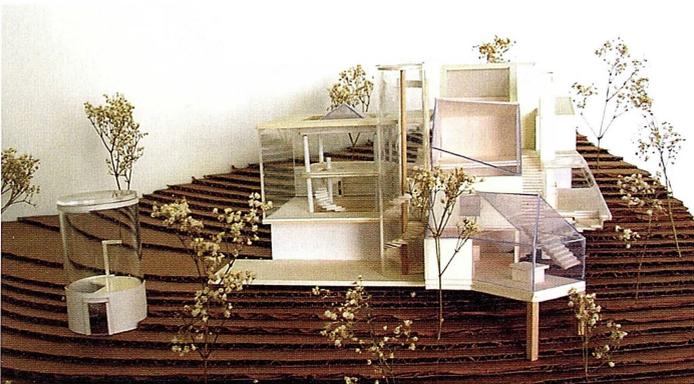
**Where did you grow up:** I was born in Serbia and moved to Queens, NY, when I was 8.

**School:** High School for Art and Design

**Hobbies:** Drawing, basketball, model making. Exploring and looking at things. I don't like to go right home, sometimes I walk around and just observe.

**What about architecture fascinates you?**

Space, size, the design, just wondering how buildings are made.



**Mario Mohan's model for a residence**

**Do you have a favorite architect? Why do you like their work?**

Richard Meier. I like the way his work transitions from public to private. The way that he uses walls and the symmetry of his buildings. I also like the way he contrasts boxes with softer forms, like spiral staircases.

**What is your favorite building?**

I don't have a favorite. But I love churches. Maybe the Washington National Cathedral; I saw it when I was in eighth grade and came back and tried to make a model of it.

**If you could have your dream design built right now, what would it look like?**

It would be private, on the side of a mountain, something noticeable. Maybe it would be all white or green, lots of glass.

**Name:** Michael Nartey

**Age:** 19

**Grade:** 12

**Where did you grow up:** I was born in Ghana and moved to New York when I was 14.

**School:** High School for Art and Design

**Hobbies:** Drawing, soccer....and, oh yeah, I am the captain of the volleyball team.

**How did you discover architecture?**

It was really a combination of things. I like math A LOT, I like science A LOT and I LOVE art, so I thought to combine these things would be architecture. Also, a relative of mine in Ghana is an architect. He was always working on models, and so I picked things up by watching him.



**Michael Nartey's model for a residence**

**What about architecture fascinates you?**

I like variety. I especially like to see emotion in architectural form: how movement, form, and space are incorporated into architecture.

**What is your favorite building?**

I am not sure, there are too many. If I had to choose one, the Douglass House by Richard Meier.

**If you could have your dream design built right now, what would it look like?**

On the beach, high on a cliff, looking out at everything. Something alive.

**The Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design and the High School for Art and Design have both participated in programs with the Center for Architecture Foundation. Through the Partnership Program and through Learning By Design:NY, the Foundation works with schools to partner professional architects and other designers in the built environment as mentors and teachers. For more information about the Center for Architecture Foundation's programs: [nyfarchitecture.org](http://nyfarchitecture.org), or call 212.358.6133.**

# Outward Bound

**The pros and cons  
of offshoring**  
By Linda Miller

When asked how large his firm is, Philip Koether, AIA, of Philip Koether Architects responds – “how big do you need it to be?” He can confidently make that claim because when the workload demands it, he can augment his staff of seven with a large drafting team. The team doesn’t occupy expensive space in his Manhattan office, its members don’t require that he purchase state-of-the-art computer hardware and software for them to do their job, and they aren’t even on his payroll. His back office is located in India – geographically and culturally a world away from New York, but that doesn’t concern him. What is of vital importance to him is that when he’s ready to call it a day, it’s the start of a new one in India. And when his design staff in New York is at home asleep, the team in India is preparing construction documents that will be awaiting his attention the next morning

“I have never understood why someone with five to seven years of expensive education should be spending so much of their working time doing routine drafting.”

- L. Bradford Perkins, FAIA, MRAIC, AICP

Two years ago, during a busy time for his firm, Koether took the leap of faith and hired Cadworld Infosystems, a medium-sized, Calcutta-based company that supplies support services to architectural firms in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany. Koether prefers to call his working relationship with Cadworld a “collaboration,” and likens it to those he has with other design services and professionals his firm works with. “Engineering, lighting, landscaping, and now drafting. I have no qualms about asking them to do anything I would otherwise ask our in-house drafting to perform – which of course, we still do,” says Koether.

With the advent of the worldwide web, a drafting department can be situated on another floor, across town, or on another continent. Work requests and the finished product are uploaded and downloaded from an FTP site, backed up by a work order delineating specifications, delivery schedule, volume, and pricing, which is usually sent by e-mail and sometimes further discussed on the telephone.

Cadworld, for example, offers a menu of services including CAD support in preparation of design development drawings from schematic sketches, CAD support in preparation of Construction Documents from Design Development drawings, 3-D visualizations, paper-to-CAD conversions, and other CAD and design services, such as editing red-lined drawings, creating detail libraries, conducting interference checks, and checking for compliance with design specifications.

It is common practice to “outsource” work and the term is used interchangeably whether the work is performed domestically or internationally. Outsourcing, however, sounds far less ominous than “offshoring.” The latter has become synonymous with being un-American, jeopardizing the U.S. economy, dooming entire industries, degrading professions, and job loss. Proponents for offshoring in the architectural community cite advantages including time savings, less wear on in-house staff, the ability to expand and contract the staff according to what’s on the boards, and the cost savings, which can be passed on to the client or added to the bottom line. Some opponents are concerned with how offshoring might compromise the integrity of the profession, while others wonder how having fewer jobs available will affect the next generation of architects. Nevertheless, offshoring has been slowly but steadily infiltrating architectural firms throughout North America, ranging from one-person boutique shops to the large multi-nationals, and offshore operations catering to architectural firms are multiplying.

Michael Jansen, CEO of Satellier LLC, a company registered in Illinois and based in New Delhi, is accustomed to addressing the concerns of prospective clients. Satellier, considered a “pioneer” in providing value-added design development services for architectural firms, has been in operation for five years. With clients in the U.S., U.K., Germany, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Dubai, they plan to grow from 125 employees – 90% of whom are architects – to up to 500. They are also considering an expansion into China, where they would specialize in 3-D computer renderings, which the area is known for. According to Jansen, common concerns include: how will the firm train junior in-house staff when production work is being executed overseas; how can the firm ensure confidentiality of the work product; how can they ensure compliance with the “direct supervision” issue; and how will they manage communication, the quality of work, and delivery schedules.

Some large firms even manage “owned” offshore facilities, many of which start as project offices in countries where the firm is working and subsequently evolve into offshore facilities. According to HLW senior associate Christiaan Janecka, who is the Shanghai operations coordinator for the firm, the Shanghai office is first and foremost a design office that pursues local projects in China. HLW shifts work among its U.S.-based and overseas offices depending on the design and technical challenges a project presents and its schedule requirements. But with a 12-hour time difference between the two cities, having an office in Shanghai enables the firm to service projects with compressed time schedules, affording the lead team in New York more time to focus on design and quality control. “We’ve put a variety of systems into place to improve communication and workflow, including long-term staff exchange programs, monthly seminar presentations, and weekly project video conferences. We’ve even written our own software program to expedite the transfer of information,” says Janecka.

“I, however,” says L. Bradford Perkins, FAIA, MRAIC, AICP, founder and principal of Perkins Eastman, “am one of the people who think offshoring can be a good thing for the profession. I have never understood why someone with five to seven years of expensive education should be spending so much of their working time doing routine drafting. If outsourcing strips away a chore that almost no one enjoys and just leaves the thinking and editing, so be it. We will have to find a different way to educate young architects but that is long overdue as well.” And Satellier’s Jansen comments, “It’s likely that going forward, architects working in the U.S., rather than being replaced by architects working overseas, will instead as a part of their basic training be educated in proper procedures for offshoring production work as they were when CAD products were introduced 20 years ago.”

Five years ago, Perkins Eastman began “experimenting” by sending a small percentage of renderings and flythroughs, as well as some production of working drawings on simple projects, to Shanghai, where they have a small office that monitors work performed by the abundance of rendering shops based there. Working drawings on select projects are being done in the firm’s Toronto office since the firm wanted to work out procedures and quality control issues before offshoring to China or India. “Even in the case of our

offices,” says Perkins, “there is a real learning curve.”

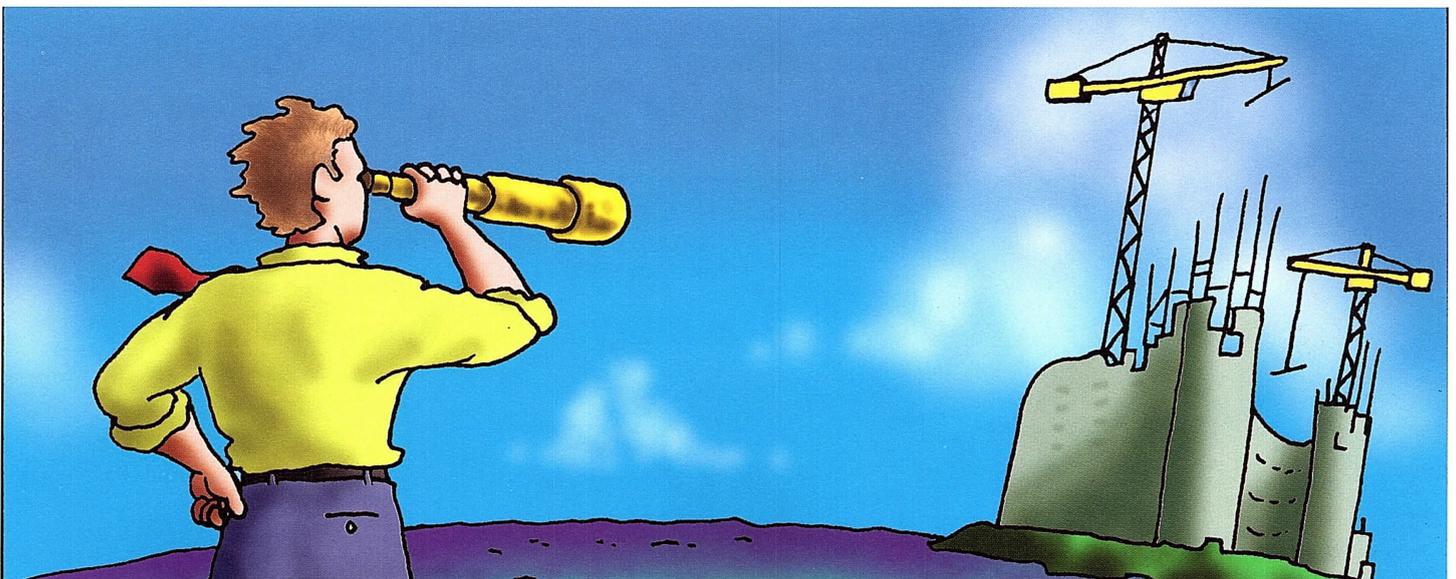
“Contrary to a common perception,” says Vinayak Sen, a principal of Cadworld Infosystems, “offshoring is not first about saving money. Architectural firms in states with a busy construction economy, New York being one of them, are dealing with a number of business challenges and a shortage of staff is the key challenge for these firms.” According to Sen, a large offshore vendor can transfer a sizable volume of resources to a particular project in a flexible manner.

In addition, when projects are coming in faster than can be handled by a firm’s in-house staff, problems can start to snowball. If designers are spending increasingly more time on non-core CAD production activities just to rush projects out the door, the quality of design may suffer. Even if the firm’s in-house staff is working super-human hours for a prolonged period of time, there’s no guarantee a project can be delivered on time, causing a host of problems, including financial ones – after all, time is money.

Sen claims that cost savings can range from between 40 and 60%, based on the U.S. cost rate of \$25 to \$30 per hour, which includes benefits, cost of space, and other indirect costs. Offshore prices typically range from \$8 to \$14, and if an additional 15% is factored into the offshore price for communications related expenses, the savings is still substantial.

Gerard “Guy” Geier II, AIA, IIDA, a principal of Fox & Fowle, is concerned about the loss of quality control and worries about the “commodization” of architectural design services. “To not be able to look over the shoulder of the designer as drawings and details are being developed raises the risk of mistakes being made,” he comments. Fox & Fowle does not send work offshore per se – but they do send a small amount of work such as renderings and presentation materials to a former employee who now lives in Argentina. He admits cost is a benefit, but more importantly, they can rely on the quality of this “freelancer’s” work and her ability to deliver on time under a tight deadline. Most importantly, “she knows our language – she knows the language of Fox & Fowle.”

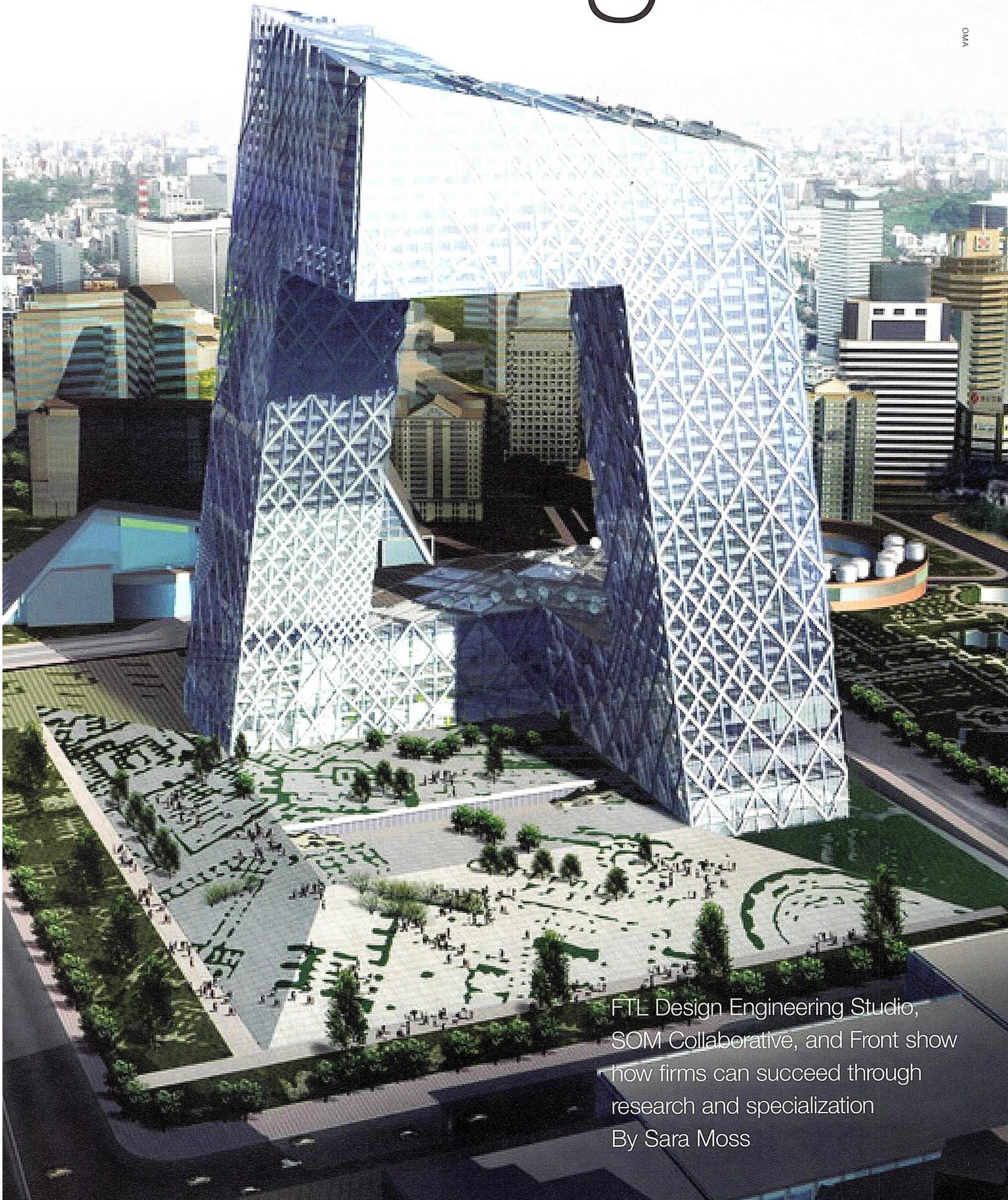
Linda G. Miller is a freelance writer. She formerly served as director of communications at the Municipal Art Society.



LZ10

# Branching Out

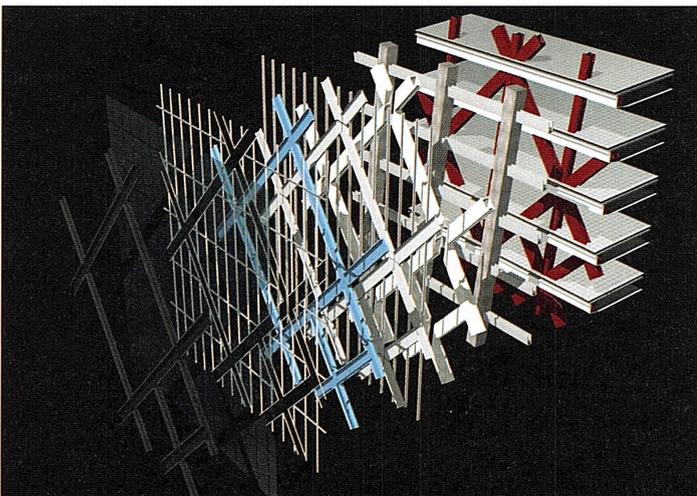
OMA



FTL Design Engineering Studio,  
SOM Collaborative, and Front show  
how firms can succeed through  
research and specialization  
By Sara Moss

**FTL** principals Nicholas Goldsmith, FAIA, and Todd Dalland, FAIA, have brought a little bit of Wall Street to their office. They now work in-house with business consultant Tom Cleary, identifying new markets for their firm's services and products. While their acronym ("Future Tents Limited") belies their focus on tensile structures, FTL's research has revealed opportunities in other types of temporary structures for both the educational and corrections industries, such as their "deployable" classrooms. They have also used their expertise in tensile structures in designing for NASA. "Our expertise is within certain technologies, so our client base is actually very varied," says Goldsmith, citing industries as diverse as aviation, transportation, and entertainment. "We span a lot of different market sectors related to a family of technologies."

Opportunities are sometimes discovered in the course of design work. In the case of SOM Collaborative, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Interior Design partner Stephen Apking, AIA, and Christian Arkay-Leliever (the Collaborative's Director of Strategic Innovation) developed Way, a new collection for Milliken Carpet, after realizing that there was a lack of options for designers. "We saw the floor plane as something rather static," says Arkay-Leliever, "and we wanted to activate the floor plane and also build an integrity into the overall interior architectural space."



FRONT

**Above: CCTV Headquarters, Beijing: Front designed the façade systems in collaboration with OMA and the East China Architecture & Design Institute (ECADI) in Shanghai** **Opposite: An exploded axonometric view of the hybrid steel, aluminum, and glass CCTV curtain wall façade system, which will be built design-build**

Front is a small firm that designs and engineers innovative façades, often for large, high-profile buildings. Specializing "just makes commercial sense," says Front partner Bruce Nichol, RIBA. "It seemed that there was a demand for the kind of knowledge that we had accumulated collectively." According to Nichol, it is also the flexibility in the firm's working method that has garnered those projects. One early collaboration with Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) – the CCTV Building in Beijing – required that Front team members spend a year working in OMA's office in Rotterdam. Front has collaborated with OMA several times since then, on the Prada Flagship Store in Beverly Hills (with Brand & Allen Architects)

and most recently with their New York office on the Wyly Theatre at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts. Recent collaborations also include the expansion and remodeling of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (Herzog & de Meuron with HGA Architects), and the New Museum of Contemporary Art in Soho (Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa Architects with Guggenheimer Architects).

Another common thread of specialization is integration of practice. Both Front and FTL employ architects and engineers. "The type of work we do – it's very hard to break out what's engineering and design," says FTL's Goldsmith. For Front, employing architects and engineers means that, when proposing unusual design solutions, cost and construction information can be provided early in the building and design process. At SOM Collaborative, an interdisciplinary division within SOM's Interiors department, architects and product designers work together. "As part of the collaborative," says Arkay-Leliever, "we're able to use talent from all over the firm." For the Way collection, designers from different SOM locations gave input on regional color preferences.

### Willing and Able

Being willing and able to work with manufacturers, and using technology to your advantage also helps. SOM Collaborative researched several manufacturers before choosing Milliken. Milliken Divisional Design Director Ronnie Magee cites their "common desire to push at the boundaries of design." And according to Magee, both parties "learned together." The company happened to be developing technology that would permit the manufacturing process – namely, a machine that could print on carpet through an ink jet process. This permitted highly detailed patterns with complex coloration, giving depth to flat-loop carpet. While Milliken developed the technology, SOM developed the color palette, getting feedback from designers in their many offices. Technology also yielded a tool; as part of their work with Milliken, SOM developed PatternBuilder software, which is sent to prospective buyers to enable them to design their own floor pattern using the Way carpet modules.



**Milliken's Way carpet collection installed at Lever House; the patterns on the 36-inch modules were designed by SOM Collaborative with large spaces in mind**

ELLIOTT KAUFMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



**The airlock in the closed position**

Front also works closely with manufacturers – what they do, as Nichol puts it, “is too unusual” for anyone else to manufacture. They try to work with materials manufacturers as early as possible so that they can provide feedback and go through the materials testing process; they often get materials fabricated around the world. Digital Project (formerly Catia) software is sometimes used as a working tool, providing Front architects and engineers with an intelligent three-dimensional model that can pinpoint structural impacts of design changes—albeit with a substantial time investment in programming at the beginning of a project. Front has used this software for several projects, including their SCL Glass project in Brisbane, Australia, in which the model will be used to build the project, literally (through computer numerically controlled (CNC) fabrication).

There is of course, a financial investment that any firm must make in research; the rewards are often not immediate and so designers must be selective when taking on such projects. SOM Collaborative has been working on 10 to 12 projects over the past five years. At FTL,



**The Advanced Inflatable Airlock, to be used by astronauts performing spacewalks, was designed for NASA by FTL in collaboration with Honeywell**

principals choose research projects knowing that they will expand the firm’s knowledge base. And finally, success does not come without risk. “You can only take on so many of those projects and you decide very carefully which ones have the greatest success probability,” says FTL’s Goldsmith. “Some of them aren’t going to come to fruition.”

Sara Moss [writes about architecture and design.](#)



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# Risk without Reward?

**Avoiding pitfalls on your way to success**

**By Thomas D. Sullivan**

Writing in *The Ten Books of Architecture* 2,000 years ago, Vitruvius praised the ancient Ephesians for their firm but flexible method of managing public building projects: an architect's personal property was held as security until the project was finished. The upside of this deal was that architects could exceed cost estimates by 25 percent without penalty.

No New York architect has that kind of margin for error now. The balance of risk and reward in the city has been shifting in recent years – often to the detriment of architects.

For some architects, narrowing margins and increasing risks with liabilities mean avoiding certain types of projects. Kenneth Drucker, AIA, Senior Principal at HOK in New York, says that his firm doesn't design residential buildings in the city. For others, concerns about liability have a subtler effect. Bennett Fradkin, AIA, says that he will consult with his partner, David McAlpin, AIA, when there's a serious risk that a feature or technology he's considering for a project might trigger a cost overrun. "We discuss it," he says.

One factor at work is that "owners and developers are more aggressive" about enforcing contracts and seeking damages from architects, says Robert J. Miletsky, who has worked in construction law for 25 years. Miletsky says that he sees a "lot more claims" made in recent years against architects by owners and developers.

Miletsky notes that owners and developers will request, or even demand, that architecture firms increase their liability insurance in order to receive a project. He describes the liability insurance rates for architects as "astronomical." Pressure for higher levels of liability coverage, Miletsky adds, gives an advantage to larger design firms, and inhibits smaller architectural firms from taking on bigger projects.

In his practice, Miletsky represented an architecture firm in a negotiation for a project, and the language the developer insisted on in the proposed contract was "so one-sided" against the architects, "we refused."

According to Zetlin, partner in the Zetlin & De Chiara law firm and General Counsel for the AIA New York Chapter, says that developers are attempting to "shift more and more risk to the architecture community." He says that, "too frequently, with that additional risk, architects do not receive adequate compensation."

Zetlin, who gives seminars about risks in contracts for architects, "Agreements are rife with potential traps for the unwary." He adds, "Too often, architects feel desperate, and cut their fees to the bone" to take on projects that carry excessive risks for designers.

Among the growing risks that architects face is responsibility for ensuring that the construction of a project is on budget. This has reached a point that "really goes beyond what is reasonable," says Thomas Fridstein, FAIA, CEO of the New York Regional Office of Hillier.

Architects, Fridstein says, are "in a terrible position regarding lia-

bility" – almost to the point of being impractical. He says architects are being held liable for keeping projects within cost estimates when many factors – including the cost and availability of labor and materials – are "very, very difficult" to predict accurately. Good owners understand this limitation, and acknowledge that architects "don't control the whole process" of construction.

On the other hand, clients, in increasing numbers, are hiring project managers to hold down the cost of building. "Their fees," Fridstein says, "come out of our hide." He notes that these project managers – unlike architects – are not required to have liability insurance, and are not held liable for cost overruns.

Taut cost constraints and the threat of litigation affect the design process, inhibiting innovation, says Fradkin. "If I'm not trying new ideas, it's not worth it to me being in this business." However, he never wants to be responsible for a job going over budget. The whole design process, he says, "is a very big balancing act" with a project's schedule, costs, systems, and function.

The balance of risk and reward in the city has been shifting in recent years – often to the detriment of architects.

Gerry Gurland, FAIA, who worked in the office of Richard Meier & Partners from 1968 to 1988, noted that Meier was a pioneer in adapting to increased demands for insurance – by purchasing project-specific policies, and persuading clients to pay for the cost of higher premiums.

Gurland is amazed how many less experienced architects know so little about their liability exposure. He also urges architects to be much more assertive in negotiating reasonable fees – and be willing to walk away from clients if the offered terms are disadvantageous. For advice to fellow architects, Gurland quotes an old military maxim, "Attack! Attack! Attack!"

Attorney Zetlin counsels architects to "take a businesslike approach to their services," and to "negotiate appropriate fees" for the services they provide – and the risks they accept.

While liability has made architectural practice more difficult, "It hasn't strangled us yet," says Fradkin, mentioning another pressure on architects – the cost of health insurance. That, he adds, laughing, and "the cost of lunch in New York."

Thomas D. Sullivan, formerly the architecture critic of *The Washington Times*, is a freelance writer and Oculus contributing editor.

# Letter from the Interior: Linking the Professions

By **Emanuela Frattini  
Magnusson, AIA**

**I am an immigrant.**

I moved to New York 15 years ago and started my professional career here. I was confused then about the division of practice in our profession, but thought that eventually I would understand it.

**Fifteen years later I still don't.**

I come from a cultural and professional background where architects design the interior and the exterior of their buildings. And when they don't design a new building, simply because in most European cities there are not that many new buildings going up, they are practicing on the interior of a building.

The design process works from the inside out and from the outside in. The design of human environments deals with both aspects, and it should do so in an integrated manner. Architecture and interior design are not two separate professions; they are specializations of one and the same.

I have been listening with interest to the debate of licensing interior designers and the various pros and cons that have been presented in support or against it.

I believe the debate is framed with the wrong premises, namely that architects and interior designers are two separate professional figures. The licensing exam for interior designers should not be different from the architectural one. Interior designers from accredited schools and programs should be automatically admitted to taking the architectural licensing exam.

The design of interior spaces should be an important part of any architectural program, and the licensing exam should reflect that. Architecture curricula need to include more courses dedicated to the development and design of interiors as an integral part of the building design process, not as an after thought. .

We would all benefit from that.

Emanuela Frattini Magnusson, AIA, was born in Milan. A licensed architect in Europe and the U.S., she has operated her own architecture firm since 1985 in London and Milan and since 1990 in New York. Widely published, she is also an interior, industrial, and graphic designer.

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# Branding: an idea whose time has come

By Raphael Shammaa

We may wonder why so much attention is being lavished on branding, which is really another way of saying differentiation. The answer is simple: heightened competition. So long as demand is strong and competition mild, no one talks about branding. But today, many firms find themselves competing for the same project.

When competing is critical, branding is crucial: in a sorting process during which they are bombarded by qualifications, proposals, and other marketing materials, prospective clients need to perceive a firm as relevant, different, and better than the competition, and just right for the job.

To brand itself as the right choice for the job, a firm may choose to focus attention on its design philosophy, its expertise in the use of certain materials and/or technologies, its achievements in the environmental arena, or even its undisputed dominance in a specific area. Each firm is by definition unique, and every branding choice is, or ought to be, different.

Let us be clear as to the main reason for branding: of all recurring expenses, the most damaging to the bottom line is business lost to the competition, time and again, at least in part for lack of clear branding. Branding helps a firm stand out from the crowd, capture new business, and charge more. Imagine that!

In addition to differentiation, it is essential to establish a clear sense of where a firm wants to be in five years, to identify and engage clients with whom the synergy is spontaneous and long-lived, to strategize the tricky steps to diversification and – most importantly – to communicate a core message. These strategies are all supremely important to the bottom line and flow directly from branding.

So long as it is necessary to define a firm as “the right firm for the right job,” architects must be careful about how they implement market diversification, and guarantee that such diversification supports a coherent firm identity. For example, in diversified firms where many departments use the same letterhead, it is useful to remember that a shared company consciousness makes for compelling internal as well as external branding.

Isn't it fair then to assume that a firm that manages and influences how it is perceived does in fact capture more business, attract more clients, and charge more for its services? Firms that succeed in positioning themselves consistently as “the right firm for the right job” are richly rewarded.

**Branding helps a firm stand out from the crowd, capture new business, and charge more. Imagine that!**

That said, while in today's marketplace it would be ludicrous to be complacent about competing, firms can still look on the bright side and see that they are faced, in Pogo's words, with “insurmountable opportunity,” and that so long as they are quick to act and are consistent in their purpose, a little branding can go a long way.

When it comes to competing, rather than out-and-out war, branding is about conquests and pre-emptive moves. It is about planting a flag on a hill and declaring it your hill. Not many have done so, and the hills have been beckoning.

From a purely strategic point of view, branding will help firms fulfill three main priorities:

- capture new business,
- charge more
- give the principal(s) something valuable to sell when it is time to move on.

Who will take the lead? To whom will the spoils go? Turning to history for counsel and precedent, Winston Churchill reminds us that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. For the vast majority of architectural and engineering firms, branding is one of those ideas whose time has definitely come.

Raphael Shammaa is principal of Tactical Branding, Inc. in New York.

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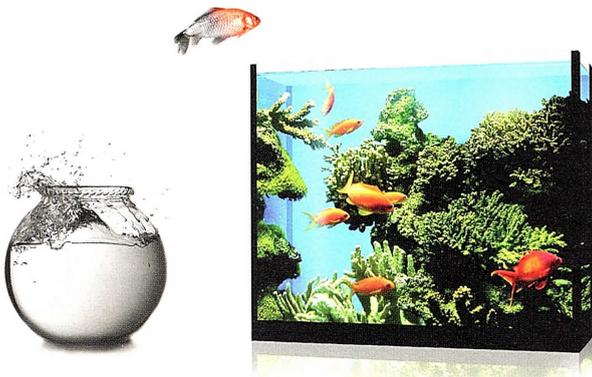
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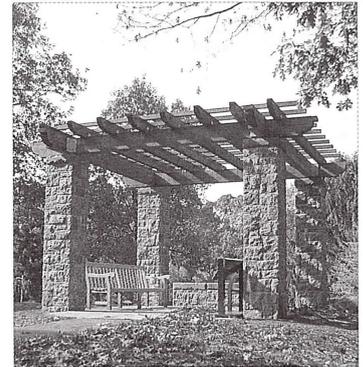
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# The New Public Engagement

**Outside View**  
**By Kyle MacMillan**  
**Denver Post**

Frank Gehry might not be primed to replace Britney Spears as a pop-culture superstar, but more and more people are paying attention to buildings and the designers responsible for them. While some of these new architectural fans are members of expected groups, such as the rich, well educated or what is now being called the “creative class,” just as many are people from a broad demographic spectrum.

This heightened level of interest could be seen in 2003 with the general public’s intense and ultimately decisive involvement in the contentious selection of an architect to oversee the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site in New York City. But perhaps more

public forums, and local enthusiasm in architecture soared, reaching new heights during the last 18 months or so. Consider:

- Attendance exceeded 700 people for some of the presentations in February and March 2004 by six international architects vying to design a permanent home for the Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver. David Adjaye, a rising star in London, was ultimately selected.
- Doors Open Denver, the city’s first-ever architectural open house held during two days in April, drew more than 30,000 visits to 82 sites in and around downtown.
- More than 1,700 people attended a free talk in May by Libeskind, who landed the commission for the Denver Art Museum addition. It is scheduled to open in the fall of 2006.

While those numbers pale in comparison to Rolling Stones tours or blockbuster art shows, they’re still impressive. Architecture’s cool factor has definitely risen several notches. Why? Certainly, the much-publicized 1997 opening of the Gehry-designed Guggenheim Bilbao museum in Spain played a role. But other factors are clearly at work



**Denver Art Museum expansion designed by Studio Daniel Libeskind**

tellingly, it has asserted itself in less likely places such as Denver, hardly an architectural center on the order of New York City or Chicago. It is hard to pinpoint the start of this phenomenon in the Mile High City, but a good argument can be made for May 2000. That’s when the Denver Art Museum selected three finalists – Arata Isozaki, Daniel Libeskind, and Thom Mayne – to head the design of a \$90.5 million stand-alone addition. The institution invited each to participate in pub-



**Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver designed by David Adjaye**

as well, including a general rise in sophistication among Americans, as evidenced by this country’s steady growth in wine consumption and increasing interest in international gourmet foods.

Whatever the reason behind this burgeoning public engagement with architecture, it represents a huge, possibly unprecedented opportunity. But what should the field do to capitalize on it? That question is one of the prime challenges facing architects, designers, and those in related professions, and how they answer it could have a profound impact on the success or failure of architecture in the 21st century.

Kyle MacMillan covers architecture as fine arts critic for the *Denver Post*.



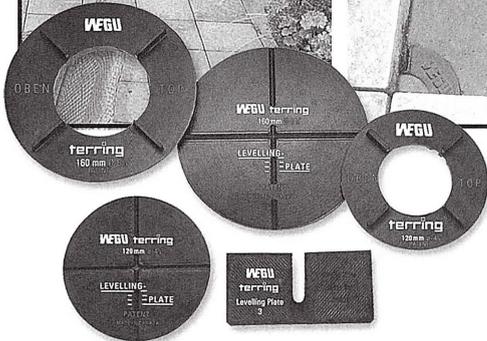
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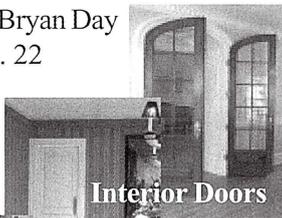
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# 33-Year Watch

Tracey Towers by  
Paul Rudolph, 1972  
By Fred Bernstein

Did architecture cause a Chinese food deliveryman to get stuck in an elevator in the Bronx – while rescue workers searched for him for days? The incident, which occurred in April, received plenty of tabloid coverage. But to set the scene, it helps to know that the building in question, part of the Tracey Towers complex on West Mosholu Parkway in the Bronx, was designed by Paul Rudolph with Jerald L. Karlan.

And if Rudolph's architecture didn't cause the elevator to get stuck, it may have added to the subsequent confusion. Arriving at the front of the complex (completed in 1972), it is impossible to know where to enter; ramps lead to more ramps, which lead to chain-link fences blocking access to the building's labyrinthine public spaces. The lobby level is really half a dozen levels, interconnected in ways that even an architecture writer can't suss out.

In private homes – including his own townhouse on Beekman Place – the complexity of Rudolph's architecture was exhilarating. But in a complex with nearly 900 apartments, occupied mostly by immigrants, the effect is very different. It's unlikely the residents think of the ramps to nowhere and interior cul-de-sacs as delights; they are instead dilemmas.

The towers (among the tallest in the Bronx, at 41 and 38 stories) are clad entirely in Rudolph's famed corduroy concrete. The material (actually tens of thousands of concrete blocks) is gorgeous – it's rare for buildings this large to feel crafted. Norval White and Eliot Willensky unfairly described the buildings as "sand castles with overactive thyroids" in the *AIA Guide to New York City*.

Up close, the concrete shows even deeper crevices than expected – as if the facades are palisades, deposited by geologic forces. The material makes the buildings seem shadowy even in broad daylight.

The buildings' other unmistakable Rudolph elements include floor plans that resemble palm fronds designed on a child's Spirograph. The multiple curves make the buildings immediately recognizable as thoughtful works of architecture. Several other New York towers – the 1987 Corinthian Apartments by Der Scutt and Michael Schimenti, on First Avenue and 37th Street, and the 1973 Lincoln Plaza Tower by Horace Ginsbern & Associates (where the corrugated bricks turn into fluted columns), at 44 West 62nd Street, are its compatriots, but in those cases the largest curves are made of glass. In Rudolph's buildings the windows are flat, and the curves are entirely masonry, giving the buildings their almost primeval mien.

The problem with curved buildings – always – is what to do with the spaces that result.

In several of Rudolph's lobby areas, the curves are used to dramatic effect. A foyer leading from the parking garage to the towers is a kind of colonnade, with a barrel vaulted ceiling and half a dozen semi-circular seating bays (their geometry reinforced by radial patterns in the terrazzo). Despite the addition of tacky light fixtures, this



FRED BERNSTEIN

**Above: Tracey Towers left: Floorplan shows square closets shoehorned into curved spaces**

is still one of the most striking interiors in the city, and one of the least known. It is Rudolph at his most expressive.

But upstairs, Rudolph's hand is nowhere to be seen. The apartments are entirely rectilinear. Square closets are shoe-horned into the curves, soaking up the residual space as best they can. A floorplan of the two-bedroom J apartment in the south tower shows an astonishingly phallic exterior projection completely hidden on the inside by wallboard meeting at right angles.

How did Rudolph, a restless and challenging architectural mind, end up doing subsidized housing in the Bronx? According to Tim Rohan, a Rudolph biographer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Rudolph was friendly with Ed Logue, president of the New York State Urban Development Corporation from 1968 to 1975 and president of the South Bronx Development Organization from 1978 to 1985.

Tracey Towers were built in a time of optimism. Logue took chances on important architects. The results of that gamble are mixed.

Fred Bernstein, an *Oculus* contributing editor, has written about design for more than 15 years. He also contributes to the *New York Times*, *Metropolitan Home*, and *Blueprint*.

# Diversity:

## Pointers on Refreshing Your Firm's Track Record

**You are convinced that you're doing all you can to lead your firm to becoming a well-diversified organization that reflects the demographics of your city, region, and clientele, and that you hire and promote staff based on merit. It's time to take a fresh look.**

**Architectural firms have long struggled to find ways to measure the benefits of workplace diversity initiatives. These benefits include retention of talented staff, avoiding the threat of discrimination lawsuits, and last not least because it's the right thing to do.**

Beyond the traditional elements of gender, race, and ethnic background, firm leaders must now be aware of age-related issues with older and younger workers working together, and tolerance issues involving sexual orientation and religion – including whether you can allow prayer groups in the workplace.

In a few years, today's minorities will be much closer to making up the majority of the U.S. workforce – forcing the focus of diversity initiatives to change as well. For instance, the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the numbers of Asian and other employees (including Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives) in the U.S. workforce will increase 44.1% by 2010; Hispanic workers will increase 36.3%; and African-American workers, 20.7%. The percentage of workers aged 55 and older will increase 46.6%.

Indeed, as a sign of a broadened perception of diversity, the prestigious Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award, which the AIA awards each year to an individual or group that has done the most to advance diversity in the profession – was in 2003 for the first time given to a non-African American recipient, the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA), which has effectively advanced the careers of Hispanic men and women in architecture and construction.

### Hiring challenges

Although many firms long for more diversity in their workforces, attracting diverse employees isn't always easy. Here are some helpful tips, drawn from the Society for Human Resource Management's Diversity Toolkit:

- Advertise openings where diverse target audiences are most likely to learn about them. Examples: Newsletters and web sites of professional associations with heavy minority membership, such as the National Organization of Minority Architects and HACIA. Employers are invited to post jobs on NOMA's online job center. (NOMA's New York Chapter is the New York Coalition of Black Architects, headed by Heather P. O'Neal, AIA. [www.nynoma.org](http://www.nynoma.org); tel: 212.661.7788.) Also consider ethnic affinity community newspapers, professional publications (including eOCULUS), and professional association web sites such as [www.aiany.org](http://www.aiany.org), and your own firm's web site. (Many architectural firms have a special link on their home page to their recruitment policy statement; some even have a job application form for submittal online).

Focus also on those publications and web sites seen by other minority groups, such as Asians, Native Americans, the disabled, workers from various generations, women, and veterans.

- Visit conferences and job fairs of groups representing minority interests. Example: NOMA's next national convention is in Birmingham, AL, October 13-15, 2005.
- Sponsor your own diversity job fair. For firms looking for a number of hires or recruiting on an ongoing basis, offer information from your firm's recruitment staff, as well as minority employees. This centralized effort makes clear your organization has a strong and active diversity initiative – an important factor to many minority job applicants.
- Exhort managers to become participants in community initiatives. This will raise your firm's visibility to potential employees from various backgrounds and bolster its reputation as an open-minded employer.

- Recruit from professional schools that graduate a high ratio of women and minorities. Metropolitan areas such as New York tend to have a more diversified cross-section of graduates. Contact the deans to obtain lists of graduating minority and women architects.
- Set up an internship program for minorities and women to help attract candidates.
- Participate in media surveys that rank firms as good workplaces. If you end up ranking high, disseminate the fact to diverse audiences.
- Consider an association or joint venture with a minority-owned firm to highlight your interest in a diversified workforce.

**Retention**

Here are additional arguments for taking your firm's diversity retention to the next level. They come from Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe, authors of *Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk Reference and Planning Guide* (McGraw-Hill, 1998):

- All turnover is expensive. Replacing each worker is costly, so it pays to consider every possible way to retain them. Understand what is important to each constituency – ethnic group, age group, and so on – then try to deliver it.
- Losing minority employees is particularly costly. Your firm's morale and reputation suffer when such employees quit for another firm. If this has happened to you, find out why so you can deal with the causes. To identify retention issues:
  - Conduct exit interviews.
  - Contact employees who have left and ask what they did and didn't like about working for you and what they like better about their new employer.
  - Don't wait for people to leave. Arrange for focus groups with diverse employees to learn what keeps them, what would make them more committed to staying, and what might lure them away.
- There are barriers to retention of minority employees. They fall into three areas:
  - Your firm's policies. Rigid travel requirements, for example, may cost you the services of single parents or employees with young children. Consider whether job-sharing could ease the problem and enable you to retain such workers.
  - Managerial skills and practices. Insensitive actions by your project managers or department heads may be hard to uncover. But once you know a problem exists, act fast, and insist on diversity training for misguided managers.
  - Individual attitudes and needs. Coworkers' attitudes can make or break retention. If there are tensions, H.R. should alert the partners so the situation can be defused before good workers leave.
- Firms need to follow these retention do's:
  - Support diverse employees to help them succeed. Launch formal

or informal mentoring or participation in a support group.

— Continue to make career advancement fair, open, and accessible to all. You may feel certain that your process is fair, but perceptions that it's biased may well spoil your organization's reputation for diversity and drive away good employees.

— Watch your language. Terms such as "quota" and "token" perpetuate misconceptions. Quality and merit must be the decisive factors for success in the firm – and the word has to come from the top.

Adapted from the article "Time to Renew Your Diversity Initiatives" that appeared in *Principal's Report* (April 2005), Stephen Kliment, editor. *Principal's Report* is published by IOMA, New York, NY. ([www.ioma.com](http://www.ioma.com)). Reproduced with permission.

**Diversity Resources**

**Books:**

- The 10 Lenses—Your Guide to Living & Working in a Multicultural World*, by Mark Williams
- The Diversity Toolkit: How You Can Build and Benefit From a Diverse Workforce*, by William Sonnenschein
- The Diversity Factor: Capturing the Competitive Advantage of a Changing Workforce*, by Elsie Cross and Margaret Blackburn White

**Organizations:**

- American Council of Engineering Companies ([www.acec.org](http://www.acec.org))
- American Institute of Architects ([www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org))
- HireDiversity.com ([www.hirediversity.com](http://www.hirediversity.com))
- AARP ([www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org))
- Hispanic American Construction Industry Association ([www.haciaworks.org](http://www.haciaworks.org))
- Hispanic Business Women's Alliance ([www.hbwa.net](http://www.hbwa.net))
- Latin Business Association ([www.lbausa.com](http://www.lbausa.com))
- National Organization of Minority Architects ([www.noma.net](http://www.noma.net))
- National Society for Hispanic Professionals ([www.nshp.org](http://www.nshp.org))
- National Urban League ([www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org))
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ([www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org))
- New York Coalition of Black Architects ([www.nynoma.org](http://www.nynoma.org))
- Society for Human Resource Management's ([www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org))
- World Association of Persons with Disabilities ([www.wapd.org](http://www.wapd.org))
- Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation ([www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org))
- International Foundation for Gender Education ([www.ifge.org](http://www.ifge.org))

# Architect Turned Politician Deconstructs Leadership

**Leadership by Design: Creating an Architecture of Trust, by Richard N. Swett, FAIA, with Colleen M. Thornton. Norcross, GA: Greenway Communications, 2005. \$39.50 (paper).**

Richard Swett, FAIA, represented New Hampshire in Congress from 1991 to 1995, served as United States ambassador to Denmark, and has lately returned to architectural practice. He was the only architect to serve in Congress during the 20th century, and probably the first to represent the U.S. overseas since Thomas Jefferson went to France from 1785 to 1789.

In the process, Swett honed his take on leadership, wrote a book about it, and this spring shared his conclusions with a curious crowd at the Center for Architecture.

His system: extrapolate the design studio method – as taught in schools of architecture and used in practice to solve problems by creating order from chaos – into a leadership philosophy which not only architects but corporate leaders and public officials of all stripes can profitably apply to becoming better leaders.

At the end of the day Swett wants to see architects in high-profile public and private positions, or at the very least possessing the ear of those in power. The alternative, he argues, is for architects to continue to be overlooked at those top levels where critical decisions are made.

Swett chides architects for having “slowly surrendered their position as the executives of the building process,” leading to a point where “the status of the architect changed from the leader of the building team to *just* [italics reviewer’s] the designer on a team of building experts.”

**One of the best parts of Swett’s book is the parade of architects and engineers he celebrates for their unique leadership qualities that pushed them to positions of great power and accomplishment. Some are well known, others newly discovered:**

**Georg Carstensen (1812-1857):** Architect, engineer, impresario. Danish-born, he designed, fabricated, and built New York’s spectacular Crystal Palace. When it burned to the ground, there wasn’t a single casualty.

**Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903):** Prominent civic leader, marshaled support for Union troops in Civil War (and with Calvert Vaux designed Central Park).

**Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895):** Publicly and forcefully championed freeing of the slaves, working through the Union League Club, which he co-founded. Influenced immigration policy and was a founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Frank Furness (1839-1912):** Won Congressional Medal of Honor as leader of troops in Civil War. Opposed elitism in the AIA of that day. Fought fee schedules, but wasn’t vindicated for another 100 years.

**William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907):** Planned Chicago’s boulevard system. Increased housing standards for workers’ housing.

**Alfred Tredway White (1846-1921):** Designed, financed, and built model tenement buildings. Was Brooklyn Commissioner of Public Works and built five city parks and 81 miles of sewer lines.

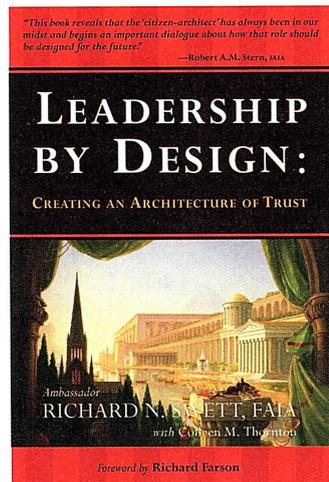
**William J. Fryer, Jr. (1842-1907):** Developed legislation in New York that became the first comprehensive modern building code of any major U.S. city.

**Florence Hope Luscomb (1887-1985):** Trained as architect but became full-time leader in extending rights of women and minorities.

**Harvey Gantt, FAIA (1943–):** Mayor of Charlotte, NC from 1983-87. Twice ran for the Senate against Jesse Helms, but lost both times. Returned to practice. On leadership he saw eye to eye with Swett, telling an audience in Copenhagen (2000): “I always felt that architects had a lot to offer. Our training to solve complex problems was an asset. Our orientation to assembling disparate pieces together could be useful in understanding complex constituencies. Our visionary ability to see a physical picture down the road – and to predict the consequences of certain actions...could make the difference.”

**Learning the political process.** Swett spells out five basic political principles for architects who aspire to leadership:

- Learn how to write a good law. Policy makers know that typically “killing a poorly conceived and/or badly written law is preferable to passing it.”
- Know all the interested parties, including lawmakers and their political stands. Study the impact of existing laws, and prevailing attitudes in areas where a new law will apply.
- Don’t put all your political eggs in one basket. “Attempt to form alliances with all the stakeholders, rather than view all other interests and opinions as merely opposing.”
- Learn from failure. “To miss the critical value of self-analysis by blaming the opposition for your failure only sets you up for your next defeat.”
- Be aware that getting a law passed the first time is the exception, not the rule. Don’t give up – try, try again. It took 12 years to get the final comprehensive 1892 New York City Building Law on the books.



**Leadership and 9/11.** If architects had better grasped the need for integrating physical design, political and economic reality, instead of focusing on fancy physical design presentations, they could have won for themselves a far stronger leadership position, argues Swett. “In a time when it seems that unbridled selfishness and narcissism run amok in contemporary society, the good leader should not be a superstar but rather a star citizen who speaks truth to power.”

Leadership by Design offers a rare look at the politics of leadership, and highlights the elements of an architect’s training that can make a leader successful.

**Communication by Design: Marketing Professional Services, by Joan Capelin, Hon. AIA. Atlanta: The Ostberg Press, 2005. \$34.95 (paper).**

*Communication by Design* has a wealth of experience distilled into its 180 pages. Included is a galaxy of do’s and don’ts, shrewd pointers on how to get published, 20 questions to ask before writing a press release, directions to give your architectural photographer, options for launching an effective PR program, and tips on successful presentations.

All of this is sorted into 29 principles, which include such astute counsel as “It’s not the crisis but how you manage the crisis that will be remembered;” “Nothing of value is free;” “Shoot to where the duck is going;” and last not least, “FUBB” – follow up beyond belief.

**Architect’s Essentials of Marketing, by David Koren. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005. \$35.00 (paper)**

Where Capelin brings to her book a wide swath of experience from having consulted with hundreds of architect clients, David Koren, Assoc. AIA, draws his knowledge from his in-depth experience as marketing director in the 250-person New York office of Gensler, the nation’s largest “pure” architecture firm. The book is divided into three parts: Marketing Strategy; the Business Development Cycle: Getting the Job; and Marketing Tools and Resources.

Neatly arranged, with useful tips, rules of thumb, and reminders tucked into a narrow column at the edge of each page, the volume, one in Wiley’s Architect’s Essentials series, is done in a friendly style free of jargon and, in addition to the basic matter needed to mount a successful marketing operation, takes a special bead on such critical concerns as planning, budgeting, scheduling, and accountability.

Stephen A. Kliment, FAIA

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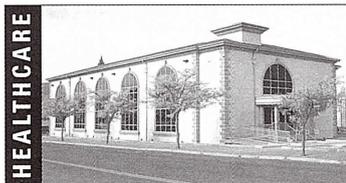
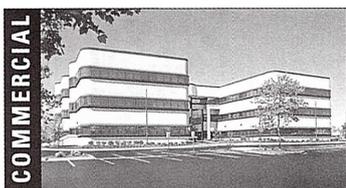
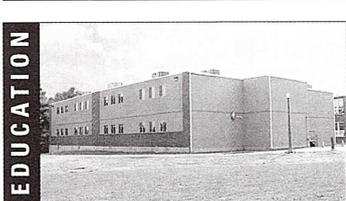
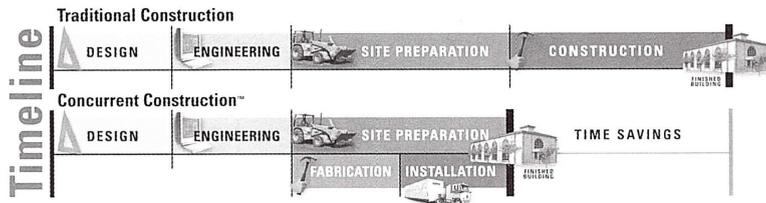
Wondering if there is life after the job you are stuck in? You need only to Google your true professional interests and come up with firms after your own heart. Until recently, though, to find out what it’s like to work there you could do no better than anecdotal word-of-mouth. Until 2002 that is, when InsideArch set out to help interns and architects get the skinny. At first it is not clear if InsideArch.org is InternsRevenge.org. Click on [www.insidearch.org](http://www.insidearch.org) and visit a firm you know first-hand to see for yourself. A quick perusal of several such firms in the Firm Index yields convincing evidence that this site is less a definitive information source and more an evolving picture of the culture of firms at any given time. It is serious about its mission, and uses research tools employed in market analysis of consumers. It relies on anonymous reports and employs qualitative safeguards.

The site’s claim that it offers an inside view into firms and professional culture in order to help career decisions and enhance the profession is another matter altogether. The delicate human problem of a good fit between employee and employer is difficult to address through a data matrix. In this regard, a visit to InsideArch is a lot like getting a peek at a firm’s credit report. Wherever you’re thinking of heading you hope the FICO score is good.

After numbing statistics, get real and visit “The Gutter” at the hyper-cool site [www.curbed.com](http://www.curbed.com). Lockhart Steele (excellent nom de plume) and cohorts Joshua Albertson and Joey Arak promise “ill mannered commentary on the architectural arts” or everything that the “fat, slow pitch that is today’s New York Times magazine” does not.

Margaret Rietveld, AIA

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# Blackberry Winter

## Last Words

Rick Bell, FAIA

Executive Director

AIA New York Chapter

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Scatter, as from an extinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind.  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth  
The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind  
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

from "Ode to the West Wind" by Percy Bysshe Shelley

If buttercups buzz'd after the bee,  
If boats were on land, churches at sea...  
If summer were spring  
And the other way round,  
Then all the world would be upside down.

traditional English tune

Punched, all thumbs, on the memo pad of a BlackBerry 7750™, these words – ashes and sparks – try to fuel an initial premise that was McLuhan-simple: instant communication has radically transformed architectural practice. Clients and architects are now joined at the hip-holster. Wireless messages hop the medium to crash headlong into project meetings and erstwhile sedentary symposia.

Has greater connectivity rendered architectural practice more rambunctious? Is every whim and whinny now conveyed indelibly, without reflection or deliberation? As a young architect, I saw the transition from telex to fax – early morning missives piled up conveying what had happened on job sites or in client offices from Cairo to Kalamazoo, from Ann Arbor to Yaoundé. The messages, though, were exercises in time travel, relaying decisions reached a day or more earlier and site progress reports by then a week old.

Now architects surreptitiously peek at their link to clients, engineers, partners, and even critics who represent, or mis-represent, what is happening in real time. Julie Dermansky, the artist who built the Center for Architecture's raw-steel lectern, sends cryptic messages from Addis Ababa or Rwanda; her wrenching photographs of prison roofs and gravesites overwhelming the hand-held screen. The technologic chill is that of a world turned inside out. Cornwallis and company may have played "The World Turned Upside Down" when it took a week, or more, to get marching orders to 18th-century Yorktown. In present day New York City, subway riders sit side-by-side with their Sidekicks, palming overweight Treos and squeezing the juice out of BlackBerrys waiting for the sunlight, and the signal.

Robert Penn Warren's novella, *Blackberry Winter*, seems to describe the anxieties of handheld computer memory, the e-mail messages you cannot or will not erase, the tasks undone, the guilt of merely working 24 hours each day:

"...what you remember seems forever, for you remember everything and everything is important and stands big and full and fills up



Time and is so solid that you can walk around and around it like a tree and look at it. You are aware that time passes, that there is a movement in time, but that is not what Time is. Time is not a movement, a flowing, a wind then, but it is, rather, a kind of climate in which things are, and when a thing happens it begins to live and keeps on living and stands solid in Time like the tree that you can walk around."

"Blackberry winter" is the phrase used in slightly different thaw times of the year from Alabama to Oregon. It refers to the cold spell that occurs before the weather gets warm for good. It is the chill that allows the blackberries to eventually appear and fully ripen. Blackberry winter is the opposite of the northeastern Indian summer. It is the calm before the *sturm und drang* of Martha & the Vandellas stomping "We're Havin' a Heat Wave."

Margaret Mead recalls her early years, her prodigious sense of possibility, in *Blackberry Winter*, the first volume of her autobiography. She starts the memoir:

Blackberry winter, the time when the hoarfrost  
lies on the blackberry blossoms, without  
this frost the berries will not set  
it is the forerunner of a rich harvest.....

Keith Jarrett didn't need the words. He leaves us speechless and awestruck - listening to his "Blackberry Winter" makes us want to go outside and topple every cellular tower. Blame BlackBerry, damn Treo, but now with instant access we enter a winter of interconnected, transcontinental discontent, working around the clock, half-blinded by carpal tunnel vision. Surfing the flittering electronic hoarfrost, we anticipate the sweaty season of blog-naked truth. Blackberry-anchored offshoring has become an architectural endless summer.

Sent from my Verizon Wireless BlackBerry

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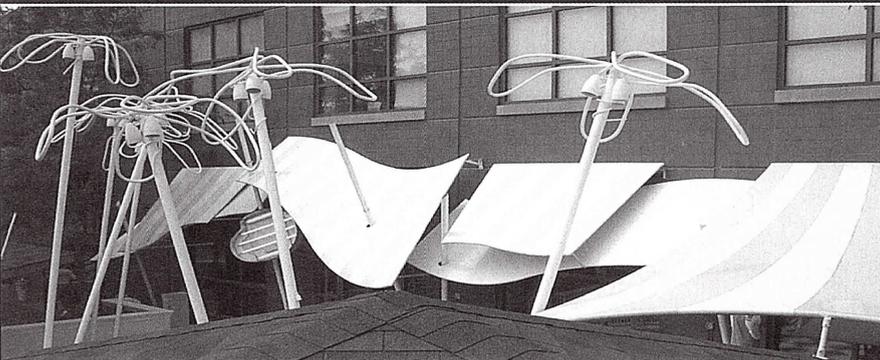
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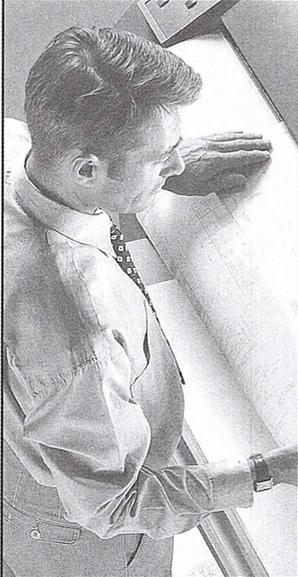
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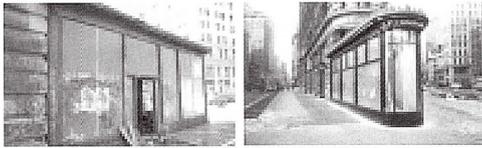
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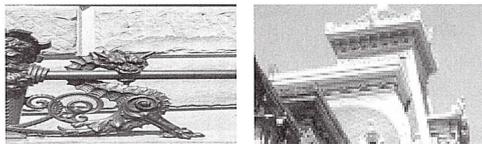
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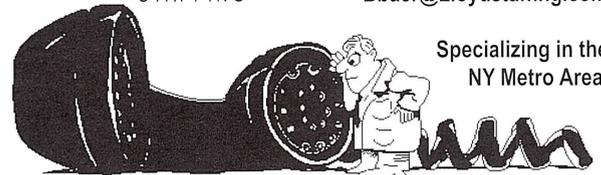
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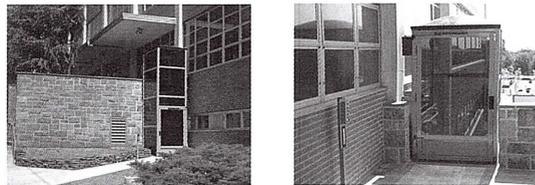
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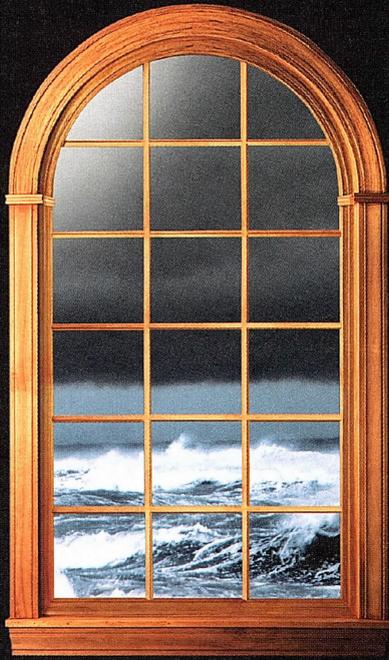
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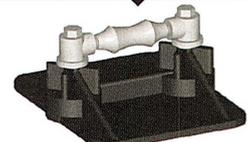
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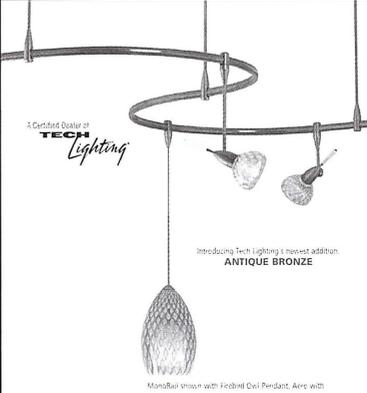
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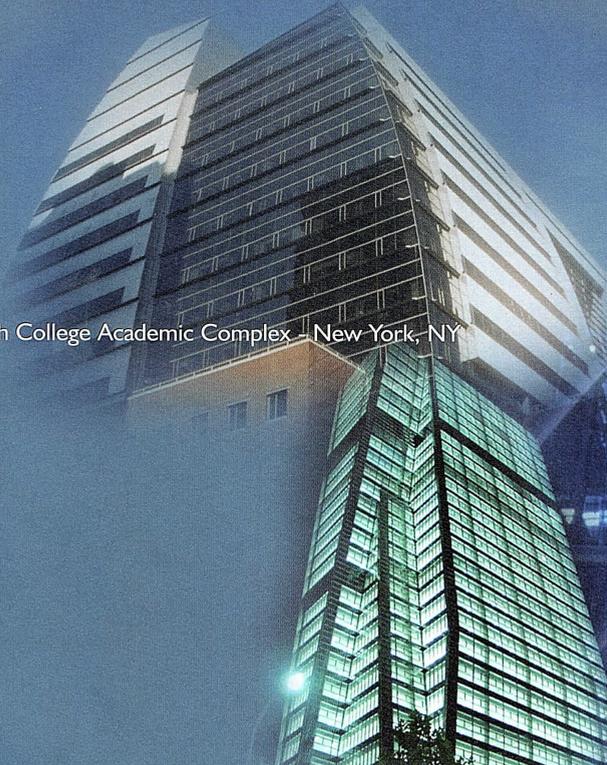
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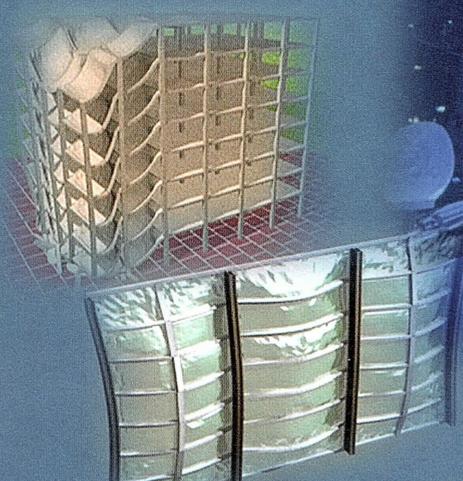
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