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ABOVE

View of the drafting room, Ford Motor bomber factory, Willow Run, Michigan, 1942. Photo: Hedrich Blessing. © Chicago History Museum.

Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War

Canadian Centre for Architecture Montreal

April 13–September 18, 2011

If World War II was remarkable for its blurring of the boundary between civil and military, it must come as little surprise that architecture enjoyed enormous prestige during that era. From the celebrated career of Archimedes, the ancient Greek mathematician and engineer, to the European architectural treatises that have for centuries divided their subject into military and civil, architecture has long been recognized as addressing both concerns. The exhibition *Architecture*

in *Uniform* documents the astonishing variety of ways in which architects and their professional skills were conscripted to serve the world's first fully industrial war and the industrial peace that followed.

The visitor enters the exhibition by passing between wall-sized photos of Hiroshima and Guernica after their respective bombings and then immediately confronts a ceiling-high silo with a broad slit running down its side. Within the silo hangs one line of portrait photos, placed at eye height and ordered alphabetically, of a representative selection of war-era architects and designers: the known and the unknown, the grizzled as well as the green, the militant alongside the artistic.

Eschewing the tired distinction between Axis and Allies, the exhibition never loses sight of architecture's paradoxical power to ravage cities or of war's human dimension. From Norman Bel Geddes' marvelous scale models of naval engagements to Hugh Casson's ingenious ideas for camouflaging buildings to Hans Stosberg's banal economic development plan for Auschwitz, the exhibition portrays architecture as both inspiring and terrifying. Ultimately, the exhibition's moral even-handedness, intelligent thematic structure, and elegant physical design ensure the impression of architecture as a discipline that demands respect not only for its strategic significance but also for its pervasive ethical gravity.

James McCown

is a Boston-based journalist and photographer specializing in architecture, design, and real estate.

RIGHT

Late-19th-century dressmakers' patterns, from *Authentic Victorian Fashion Patterns, A Complete Lady's Wardrobe*, Kristina Harris, editor, Dover Publications, 1999.

Tailoring Form

pinkcomma gallery Boston

April 8–May 15, 2011

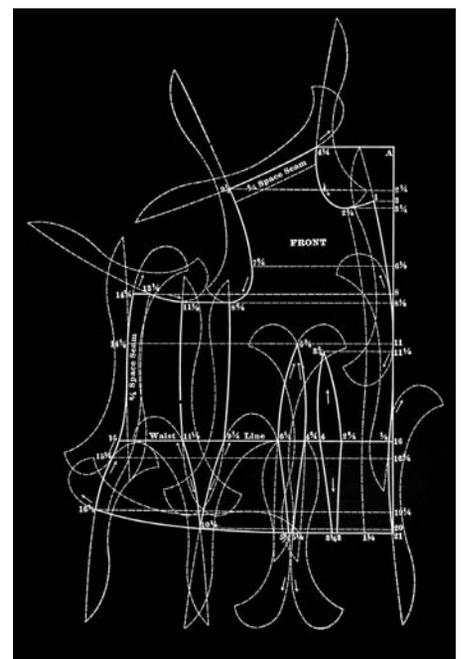
What do a Renaissance cathedral and a 1950s finned car have in common? They were both produced using templates, which Webster defines as a "gauge, pattern, or mold used as a guide to the form of a piece being made."

Tailoring Form, a small but superb exhibition, includes a wide range of templates, increasingly scarce artifacts in an age of digital design and production.

Filippo Brunelleschi used full-size wood templates to produce

the massive stone ribs of the dome of the Florence cathedral. General Motors designers spent weeks using curved rulers and clay to shape the swooping surfaces of the Firebird III concept car. Other exhibition items explore how airplane, boat, and even dress design are all beholden to the template. The curators, Natalie Fizer and Glen Forley of New York, insist the template be celebrated in and of itself.

Bravo, Fizer, Forley, and pinkcomma. *Tailoring Form* is really a homage to the ingenuity, patience, and sweat that was design in the precomputer age.





Seen

The Sea Ranch Sonoma County, California

Carl Solander AIA is the founder of Reverse Architecture in Somerville, Massachusetts, and teaches at Wentworth Institute of Technology.

ABOVE
Sea Ranch.
Architects: MLTW and Joseph Esherick, with Lawrence Halprin.
Photo: Jim Alinder.

For the author's photos of the Sea Ranch, visit www.architectureboston.com

We arrived awestruck, ill, and exhausted. My wife and I had driven 100 miles north from San Francisco, our infant daughter asleep while our stomachs roiled with the dramatic hairpin turns of Route 1. Finally, we could stop and take it in: the Sea Ranch.

I had learned about this place mostly through hints and references, maybe an errant slide slipped into a lecture on vernacular influences in Modernism. Sea Ranch was not a hot topic of study for my generation, what with the rise of the computer and its formal exuberances. But perhaps you have to first delve into the fantastic and immaterial to fully appreciate something so direct and tangible.

A brief impression: houses of weathered redwood and cedar, spread across the landscape in a more spacious version of a cul-de-sac suburb, displaying every imaginable variation of the shed roof, all

interconnected by the automobile, evidence of which is camouflaged within the undulations of the bluffs.

Somehow, I could barely find the time to seek out all the individual architectural gems; I was too overwhelmed by the whirling grasses and the crashing surf. The great achievement of Sea Ranch is its concealment of architectural vicissitudes within nature. The suburb recedes as one walks, and the surreal quality of a human landscape superimposed onto a natural one takes hold. The joy of Sea Ranch is to wander along this edge, looking in one direction into the infinity that is the Pacific and in the other at weathered walls, gray receding into waves of green. We stood on this path with other visitors, clutching my daughter as we watched seals on the beach below. Her sudden calm within the blustering wind struck me as fitting.

Received

Back to School

Louis I. Kahn: Conversations with Students

By Louis Kahn
Princeton Architectural Press, 1998

The delight in this slim volume is its straightforward simplicity: the unadulterated words of a poetic teacher. This is one title in a nine-book series that includes Mies van der Rohe, Ian McHarg, and Peter Smithson.

The Study of Architectural Design: With Special Reference to the Program of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design

By John F. Harbeson AIA
Pencil Points Library, 1926
(Reissued by W. W. Norton & Company, 2008)
Frustrated with answering the same questions over and over from his students,

Harbeson created this guide to the Beaux-Arts educational system—the dominant idea of American architectural training through the 1940s. Follow the illustrated assignments and indulge your inner classicist.

Citizen Architect: Samuel Mockbee and the Spirit of the Rural Studio

Directed by Sam Wainwright Douglas
DVD (60 minutes), Big Beard Films, 2010
This film revisits the familiar but still inspirational tale of Auburn University's design/build program in impoverished Alabama—this time with new interview footage of the late architect/teacher Sam Mockbee FAIA, the program's charismatic founder; conversations with clients; and commentary by Peter Eisenman, Cameron Sinclair, Michael Rotondi, and others. The legacy continues.

Inventing American Modernism: Joseph Hudnut, Walter Gropius, and the Bauhaus Legacy at Harvard

By Jill Pearlman
University of Virginia Press, 2007
Pearlman presents Hudnut as an unsung hero—a pioneer of American architectural education, a public intellectual, and an awful self-promoter. Hudnut hired Gropius, Gropius soon became a rival, and the rest, as they say, is history.

101 Things I Learned in Architecture School

By Matthew Frederick
The MIT Press, 2007
Frederick's witty and clear reflections mix with succinct philosophy. His knack for distilling wisdom now extends to a series of professions: film, culinary arts, fashion, business, and others; browse them at 101thingsilearned.com.

Back to the Future

2940 Chain Bridge Road, Washington, DC

Ann Hershfang

HON. AIA, HON. BSA
is cofounder of WalkBoston. She served on the boards of Massport and the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, and as undersecretary of transportation for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

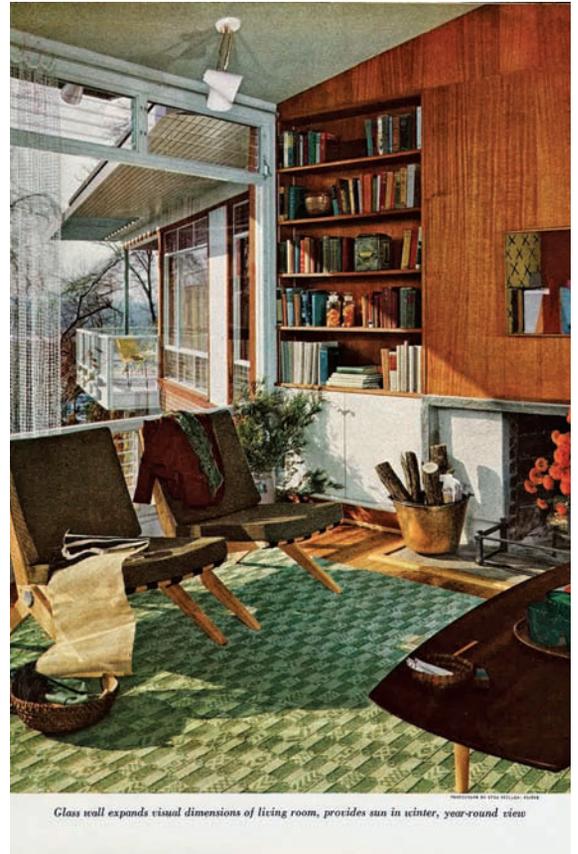
The house at 2940 Chain Bridge Road was commissioned by Hershfang's parents and featured twice in *House Beautiful* in 1951 for its climate-control features and for its kitchen design. For PDFs of the original stories, including drawings, see: www.architectureboston.com.

Image: Reprinted with permission of *House Beautiful*, © 1951. Photograph by Ezra Stoller © Esto.

My parents' house was quite "green"—so green, in fact, that it was a case study in *House Beautiful*'s "Climate Control Project" and featured in the April 1951 issue. Designed by Chloethiel Woodard Smith FAIA, it had radiant heat and a porch overhang to keep out summer sun and admit winter sun. All the rooms had louvered windows at the bottom on one side and at the top on the opposite side to encourage cross ventilation. An air space between the ceilings and roof, a large hall fan to exhaust hot air, and sprinklers that cooled the roof when it got too hot kept us in reasonable comfort during the DC summers.

From every room, you could look out through glorious plate glass into woods (not an easy feat on a 0.7-acre lot). The house was on one floor, which was very useful as my mother aged. Like other Modern houses of the period, its bedrooms were compact, its closets even more so—not a bit elaborate but splendid.

The house is still there, on its fourth owner since us. I go back every now and then. Each successive owner has made changes. The third one joined our three bedrooms into one; the current owners have added an additional story and an outside swimming pool, an excellent use for a difficult yard. The house still has its plate glass, openness, view, and beauty. With its idiosyncratic style, it has always been slow to sell but always adored by its owners. The current ones are no exception.



Glass wall expands visual dimensions of living room, provides sun in winter, year-round view



Focus

Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry

Since 2000, MIT professor and landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn FASLA has taught "Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry," a course that explores seeing as a way of knowing and photography as a way of thinking. Students keep journals and develop portfolios of images that investigate a single place in the Boston area throughout the semester.

For a selection of student photographs: www.architectureboston.com

For the course website: architecture.mit.edu/class/landphoto

LEFT

Charles River/Storrow Drive, 2009, by Ethan Lacy.



Covering the Issues

Gretchen Schneider
AIA, LEED AP is the
principal of Schneider
Studio in Boston.

Read all about it... *Library Journal* presents its top 20 “New Landmark Libraries” (May 15, 2011). In this cover story and related print and online commentary, the editors showcase relatively unknown-yet-exemplary small libraries across the US, with the hope of inspiring other communities. Current design trends include sustainability, flexibility, transparency, and collaborative spaces, which together help these libraries become more effective community centers. Even though technology is rapidly transforming the book, the need for free access to information—especially for children, elders, and immigrant populations—is as powerful today as it was when the Boston Public Library launched the institution in 1852.

The end of the world as we know it... Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Díaz tackles “Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal,” in a *Boston Review* cover story (May/June 2011). The Haiti earthquake killed an estimated 220,000 people, left iconic historic and cultural buildings in ruins, destroyed the electrical grid, and left 10 percent of the population homeless. Díaz notes that the Greek root of the word apocalypse means “uncover and unveil,” arguing that the calamitous effects of the earthquake—as well as the recent Asian tsunamis and Hurricane Katrina—were caused by human actions, not nature. From issues of deforestation and poor infrastructure to depleted coral reefs and global inequality, Díaz reminds us that Mother Nature is not subject to moral judgment.

Dollar signs... Today, 3.5 million people live in cities; by 2050, that number will nearly double, with the most explosive growth happening not only in Brazil, China, and India but also in smaller nations including Vietnam, Colombia, and Chile. Peter Loscher, head of Siemens (makers of urban infrastructure such as computer-operated trains, electrical transformers, and water-treatment systems), sees enormous market potential. In “Urban Outfitter” (*Forbes*, May 9, 2011), writer Daniel Fisher describes Loscher’s vision,

explaining that “even shantytowns need electricity and clean water.” Siemens is designing special equipment that functions in high humidity, with solar power, and at a lower price point, as it’s partnering with explosively growing cities to improve carbon emissions and energy efficiency. Good design is great business?

Preservation gets pummeled... Rem Koolhaas’s recent exhibition and lecture at the New Museum on the state of historic preservation has prompted a torrent of commentary. Architectural critic (and *ArchitectureBoston* editorial-board member) Sarah Williams Goldhagen provides important context in “Death by Nostalgia” (*The New York Times*, June 10, 2011), explaining how preservation has become a means for planning, design review, and development (yes, and actually preserving valuable old buildings, too), where projects are often evaluated in terms of economic dealmaking rather than historic importance. Writing for *ARTINFO* (posted May 16, 2011), Ben Davis suggests that the “solution is not a better theory of preservation, but a more humane model of economic progress.” Meanwhile, *The New Yorker*’s Paul Goldberger (posted May 10, 2011) argues that the real issue is not the limits that preservation imposes but the marketing of architectural celebrity. Time will tell?

LA story... Sometimes *GOOD* is great. The Spring 2011 edition of this five-year-old quarterly explores “critical issues facing global cities,” with Los Angeles as its focus. Touching on schools, urban ecology, riots, homelessness, houses of worship, water, density, and the politics of mixed use, its wide range of contributors include architects and designers to writers who shaped LA’s image, from novelist Joan Didion to urban thinker Mike Davis. Directly and indirectly, the built environment pervades all. Chock-full of hip infographics and photography, the print magazine is only the first step; be sure to check out *GOOD*’s robust website and event schedule, too.

The 80 Percent Challenge

MassINC

Boston

May 19, 2011

Peer pressure: it's not just for high school anymore.

In 2008, Massachusetts passed the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA), putting the Commonwealth on the leading edge of US climate-change policy with an ambitious goal: reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by the year 2050. That target will require significant cultural shifts. Realizing this, independent think tank MassINC conducted a statewide survey to gauge public response to climate change and then convened an expert panel and a public forum to discuss the results.

For the most part, the findings confirmed information many attendees had probably seen elsewhere, such as the fact that most people simply don't rate climate change as a "high priority" issue (only 32 percent in this study). Jobs and the economy, healthcare, and education all dominate their concerns. But one finding did jump out: Even among those people whom the study defined as "convinced" (people who believe that climate change is both the result of human activity and a serious threat), only one-third of those aged 18 to 29 are taking personal action to conserve energy; thus the cohort widely considered to be most concerned by climate change is doing the least. The panel offered the explanation that, no matter one's age, environmental behavior, like behavior in general, is strongly influenced by the actions of peers, known as "normative messages."

Panelist David Cash, the undersecretary for policy in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, provided an illustration. In communities where one household installs PV (photovoltaic) panels within view of neighbors, it is often just a matter of time before panels start to pop up throughout the neighborhood. Similarly, as an audience member observed, residents of city blocks tend to recycle either almost entirely in unison or not at all. Whether these examples provide evidence of environmental peer pressure is debatable, but normative messages have proven to be successful as part of other cultural-shift campaigns, such as anti-smoking initiatives.

Ultimately, meeting the GWSA's ambitious targets will require tougher regulations at a policy level. But if this research is any indication, individual action can influence the action of others, and collective action in turn builds support for policy. It is through the creation of this "culture of climate protection" that real change is possible.

Keller Roughton AIA, LEED AP is an architect at Gensler in Boston and a member of the BSA Committee on the Environment.

For more information: www.massinc.org/Research/The-80-percent-challenge.aspx

FLOATING WORLD PROJECTS

www.floatingworldprojects.org

We are a Boston-based arts organization focused on fostering international artistic collaboration. Recent work draws inspiration from the architecture and streets of New York and Istanbul, combining photography, print, and glass.

Our newest exhibition "INVISIBLE CITIES" opens at the Society of Arts and Crafts on August 6th

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