



2008 theme "Architecture: Designs for living"

January 03, 2008 - Spotlights

By James McCullar, AIA - The inauguration of the 2008 AIA New York chapter president and board on December 4 was a standing room only event at the Center for Architecture. Our 2007 president Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA, IDA, surveyed the accomplishments of the past year, I presented the 2008 theme Architecture: Designs for Living, national AIA president, Marshall Purnell, FAIA, AIA gave the keynote address, and our executive director, Rick Bell, FAIA, tied the evening together.

Under the leadership of our 2007 president, Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA, IIDA, last year was an extraordinary year. Blumenfeld's theme Architecture Inside/Out brought an increased awareness to the importance of the interior spaces in which we live and work, and promoted a design excellence program that will begin to transform the quality of work environments in our city. She led the chapter in taking architectural advocacy positions on a record number of projects requiring city approvals - in her words speaking "Truth to Power" - by finding a just balance between competing interests. Joan presided over the Chapter's many programs and the AIA New York State Convention that celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the AIA in New York City. As the 2008 immediate past president, we look forward to her continued leadership in the many issues she has initiated.

In a more somber note, we experienced the unexpected loss of four past presidents last year: Margaret Helfand, FAIA (2001), Denis Glen Kuhn, FAIA (1989), Martin David Raab (1988), and Giorgio Cavaglieri, FAIA (1970), all of whom contributed so much to make the chapter what it is today. We will miss them.

As I stated in my acceptance speech, I am extremely honored to become president of the AIA New York Chapter at a time when its influence is at an all-time high thanks to the phenomenal success of our Center for Architecture. I hope to bring the same level of energy to the chapter that I brought to our housing programs in response to the mayor's housing and urban design initiatives after 9/11.

The 2008 theme -- Architecture: Designs for Living -- is envisioned to reflect the broad range of building typologies that shape our communities and urban design that defines our city. The theme incorporates and expands on themes by my immediate predecessors: Bringing Cultures Together (Susan Chin, FAIA, 2005); Architecture as Public Policy (Mark Strauss, FAIA, 2006); and Architecture Inside/Out (Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA, IDA, 2007). As Blumenfeld's Inside/Out focuses on the interiors of buildings, Designs for Living continues the progression from buildings to community. The theme is also envisioned as our response to the mayor's initiatives for PlaNYC, which anticipates the need for sustainable growth to accommodate one million new residents. It is meant to appeal to the widest audience of architects, industry, and friends of architecture.

Increasingly we are part of an emerging global community - from our own city to emerging regions around the world whose populations and economies are growing at phenomenal rates. As architects, we belong to an extended family represented by the AIA with over 80,000 members

from urban chapters like our own to many others like the AIA Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas where I grew up, but each equally committed to a vision for a sustainable future. The 2008 theme and programs support building partnerships to achieve that vision.

A Public Lecture Series at the Center for Architecture will present surveys of design directions that will form the "building blocks" for new growth envisioned by PlaNYC -- from housing to schools, cultural facilities, parks, transportation and other uses that form our neighborhoods and workplaces.

A Global Dialogues series forms partnerships that will place the AIA in support of emerging initiatives that will affect our future growth.

* A United Nations Conference on Sustainable Urban Design that will share PlaNYC initiatives with global cities is planned for April during Earth Week.

* A Northeast Megaregion Conference with the NYU Rudin Center for Transportation and the Regional Plan Association will explore the role of new development linked to high speed transit from Boston to Washington, D.C.

* Cultural Dialogue programs planned with the Swiss Consulate and NYU's Maison Francaise will share design directions in a larger cultural context.

Nine major exhibitions at the Center for Architecture will begin with a China Newness and Co-Evolution, include showcases of sustainable design, design awards, emerging practices, architectural schools, and end with the Designs for Living theme exhibition.

Our internationally recognized Design Awards will be enriched by the addition of Biennial Building Type Awards co-sponsored with the Boston Society of Architects, which will to promote design excellence and innovation in schools, housing and other facilities that form the fabric of our communities.

We welcome you to our 2008 Design Awards Luncheon at Cipriani Wall Street on April 30; the Heritage Ball on October 30 at Chelsea Piers; and to programs and exhibitions at the Center for Architecture. Visit our website and calendar at www.aiany.org, and if you are in the West Village, please drop in any time - we are open six days a week. And better yet, become a member.

On a closing note, I wish to thank the many sponsors of the 2008 Inaugural Theme Fund. We could never achieve the quality of advocacy and design excellence at the Center without their generous support.

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