

CRANBROOK ACADEMY

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

### 2002 ACSA/AIA TEACHERS' SEMINAR

#### AT CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART

#### JULY 19-22, 2002

#### PROGRAM CO-CHAIRS

**Representing ACSA:**

**Representing AIA:**

Maurice Cox, University of Virginia

Harris Steinberg, AIA, Steinberg and Stevens Architects and  
Penn Praxis of the University of Pennsylvania

#### THE CITIZEN ARCHITECT AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

As architects, we must be able to work comfortably, within an atmosphere of trust, with business people and policy makers, planning committees and community groups. We must acknowledge and celebrate participation in all walks of life, including alternative career paths, in order for the talents, skills, and vision of the architect to be recognized as crucial to the social and civic health of our communities and our nations. Architects' skills as creative thinkers, problem solvers, planners, listeners, organizers, and implementers are valuable and needed within the public arena. It is important to acknowledge that many architects are already engaged within their communities. While they have embraced and promoted many worthwhile social causes—including the environmental movement, urban blight, the plight of the homeless, and historic preservation—a larger, more substantive professional commitment to the substance of civic engagement is required.



The architecture of engagement involves architects and planners working at the community level on issues of housing, economic development, and preservation. It is architects working with politicians and business leaders in an atmosphere of mutual respect, in order to solve problems and create lasting legacies for future generations. Civic engagement involves the architect as city council person, politician, and policy maker; bringing problem-solving skills, depth of intellect, and a designer's sensibility to the thorny and complex issues

that dominate our times. Civic engagement requires the architect to offer the public insight into the compelling issues of the day. An architecture of engagement demands that we not retreat from society's seemingly intractable problems, but rather that, through advocacy, front-line leadership, public policy-making, and example, we partner with our communities for the benefit of the common good.

The architecture of engagement acknowledges that the architect is but **one** component of a complex and fascinating civic mix, that our ideas and dreams and visions will only be realized if they are associated and grounded within a much wider social matrix. We must build a bridge between the architectural profession and society if we are to create a finely textured and nuanced indigenous architecture that accurately reflects, challenges, and communicates the values, goals, and accomplishments of our times. As we develop a new model, the architect as engaged citizen, we must also develop new theory and criticism that have the human experience of our environment at their core. Architecture will once more become a sensual and social art instead of merely being a perfunctory, visual one.

This condition is not new. As Lewis Mumford wrote in 1924 in his ground-breaking work *Sticks and Stones*, in a chapter entitled *Architecture and Civilization*, "Our architectural development is bound up with the course of civilization: this is a truism. To the extent that we permit our institutions and organizations to function blindly, as our bed is made, so must we lie on it; and while we may nevertheless produce isolated buildings of great esthetic interest...the matrix of our physical community will not be effected by the existence of separate jewels."

This conference will bring together practicing and academic architects in an attempt to address the crucial intersection behind theory and practice, as we explore the following issues:

- **Architects as University Leaders**
- **Architects as Political Leaders**
- **Architects as Community Leaders**
- **Architects as Professional Leaders**

Participants will engage in a series of presentations, symposia, conversations, and workshops designed to broaden and deepen an understanding of the role of the architect in society. The seminar is designed to provoke consideration and discussion about leadership models for architects in the academy, the community, the political arena, and the business world. The intention is to stimulate and create innovative ways of thinking about the role of the architect in society and to help bridge the gap between the academy and the profession by acknowledging that architecture is a collaborative profession grounded in the world around us. ACSA/AIA Teachers' Seminar participants are eligible for Learning Units in the AIA Continuing Education System.



Please contact Michelle A. Rinehart at tel: 202/785-2324 ext.8 or email: [mrinehart@acsa-arch.org](mailto:mrinehart@acsa-arch.org) for more. Future information about the Teachers' Seminar will be available online at: [www.acsa-arch.org/meetings](http://www.acsa-arch.org/meetings).

#### Registration Form

**Deadline: Wednesday, July 10**

Name/title:

Affiliation:

Mailing address:

City:

State/zip/country:

Phone/fax:

Email:

#### REGISTRATION RATES

- Basic ACSA/AIA member  
**\$650**
- Local ACSA/AIA member (no lodging)  
**\$350**
- AIA Associate (# \_\_\_\_\_)  
**\$350**
- Student (w/student ID)  
**\$150**
- Local AIA Associate (no lodging)  
**\$150** (# \_\_\_\_\_)

Basic registration fee includes all on-site costs: dormitory lodging, meals, and reception. Mail or fax this form (one per person) together with check, money order, or purchase order made payable to ACSA in US\$ to: 2002 ACSA/AIA Teachers' Seminar, 1735 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006; fax: 202/628-0448.

