

aiaVT

architecture in the green mountains

10.02



president

stewart sutcliffe, aia
mrimports@aol.com

vice president

ken bean, aia
kcbean@zoo.uvm.edu

secretary/treasurer

donna leban, aia
djleban@together.net

michael gohl, aia
gohlfish@vtlink.net

directors

steven clark, aia
sclarkj@adelphia.net

david epstein, aia
depstein@truexcullins.com

william gallup, aia
bgallup@burley
partnership.com

michael hoffman, aia
mhoffman@norwich.edu

christopher foster, assoc.aia
csfoster@valley.net

executive director

hanne williams, hon. aia
aiavt@madriver.com

aiaVT is published by AIA Vermont, the Vermont Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1662 Mill Brook Road, Fayston, Vermont 05673, phone 802-496-3761, fax 802-496-3294.

aiaVT is edited by Steven Clark, AIA, and produced by Carolyn Isaak. Published views are the author's and not necessarily the views of AIA Vermont or any other organization.

Articles, notices and graphic submissions should be sent to Steven Clark, AIA, 60 Terrace St., Montpelier, VT 05602 email: sclarkj@adelphia.net phone 802-223-2097.

AIA Vermont reserves the right to edit articles for available space and determine appropriate content prior to inclusion. Submissions must be received by the 5th of the month prior to publication.

the triumph, and the tragedy, of the commons tai soo kim at middlebury donald maurice kreis

Middlebury College is quietly doing something that none of its nearest rivals is – neither the physically closest undergraduate institutions like UVM or Dartmouth, nor the traditional small liberal arts colleges like Bennington or Williams with which Middlebury competes for students, teachers and dollars. Embarking upon its third century, **Middlebury is rebuilding and, thus, reinventing itself** – not merely in some abstract sense, which would interest educators and policymakers, but in the physical sense, which ought to be of the keenest interest to New England architects.

This is why November 9 will be such an extraordinary occasion. Middlebury, through the good offices of Professor Glenn Andres, teacher of architectural history, is inviting Vermont's architects to campus on that date for an in-depth look and discussion. Given the magnitude of what the College is undertaking, and the high profile Middlebury cuts in Vermont, it is as if the Medicis themselves were opening their family album to professional scrutiny.

Of the many projects Middlebury is undertaking, none exemplifies the transformation better than the most recent to open – Ross Commons, the residential, dining and social complex, completed in time for the fall semester and designed by Tai Soo Kim Partners of Hartford, Connecticut.

Kim studied under Paul Rudolph at Yale and credits that great modernist as among his major influences. This is ironic because Ross Commons represents both a programmatic and an aesthetic rebuke to a kind of Rudolphian era that briefly flowered at Middlebury a generation or so ago, within feet of the Ross Commons site on the northwestern quadrant of the picturesque campus.

It was the 1960s and Middlebury, under the leadership of the affable and enlightened President James Armstrong, was first seeking to move away from a fraternity-centered campus life to a less antediluvian and more inclusive mode for organizing a collegiate community that had, after all, then been coeducational for some 80 years. Armstrong is a Princeton alumnus and thus, not coincidentally, his administration's answer was Princeton-style eating clubs and a big new quadrangle of residences to house students liberated from the frat houses.

Up went a whole campus neighborhood that was intriguingly, even charmingly, in the spirit of Paul Rudolph. The first three eating clubs, three intimate dining halls connected by a central kitchen, were designed by Boston's Shepley Bulfinch firm. Burlington's own Freeman French Freeman got the commission to design four dormitories – Hadley, Milliken, Kelly and Lang. There was plenty of concrete brutalism in both projects – but, in each instance, both the project's scale and its elevations labored heroically to resonate with the indigenous architectural heritage and imperatives. There were even pitched roofs, otherwise heresy for that era.

How reviled did these buildings become? They were so un-beloved that, unlike every other building at Middlebury, they were known only by the most generic of names – the eating clubs always referred to as the "SDUs" (for "social and dining units") and the residences, simply and derisively, as "the new dorms." The tiny rooms and goofy program of the latter, with bathrooms doubling as hallways, can hardly be blamed on the architects.

Armstrong's eating clubs never took hold, but in the 1990s the College resurrected a very similar idea in the form of a resolution to expand the size of the school modestly (from around 1900 students to 2,350) and organizing the student body, both physically and administratively, into four sub-communities, each known as a "Commons."

The Tai Soo Kim complex is the first of several major construction projects designed to implement this residential transformation fully. Like their predecessors at Shepley Bulfinch, the architects at Tai Soo Kim Partners have sought to reconcile current trends in architecture with the traditional, granite-clad look of the campus. A 67-bed dormitory forms a right angle with an office and dining complex, built to serve up to 300. The dorm details are not dissimilar to those of other dwelling places on campus, but both structures adopt a gently curving roof form that is both distinctive and provocative. This gesture feels far more satisfying in the west-facing dining facility, where the curvature echoes the topography of the site. Alas, an enclosed walkway connecting the complex with Hadley and Milliken nearby has the effect of walling off the project's dooryard from the Adirondack panorama to the west. Inexplicably, the architects specified opaque glass for this structure, blocking views and creating ponderousness instead of beauty.

The dining hall inside has a supple sumptuousness about it that will seem oddly opulent to anyone who attended Middlebury when the tuition was **\$5,900 a year rather than its present \$35,900**. Frankly, the place looks like a beautiful restaurant rather than a cafeteria – and, indeed, meals will be cooked to order there. In other words, Middlebury may have abandoned an antediluvian fraternity-centric campus life but, like its competitors, the College has regrettably felt it necessary to add a level of luxuriousness that, along with academic excellence, allows the school to continue to compete for top students while charging top dollar. But even those with a curmudgeonly view of such developments will find it difficult to avoid enjoying the way in which the curved roof expresses itself in the interior ceiling. Likewise, those who love the breathtaking landscape to the west of the campus – the undulating farmland with the Adirondacks looming in the distance – will appreciate the way Kim and his colleagues embraced this panorama at ground level, rather than swallowing it whole in the gigantic manner of the ominous Bicentennial Hall, which was completed in 2000 and designed by Payette Associates.

Unlike most institutions in mostly rural Addison County, Middlebury College has a skyline. The western campus, situated atop a hill, presents a highly visible architectural tableau to those approaching from the west along Route 125. For years, the skyline had a scale that was appropriate – the modestly-sized Freeman-designed dormitories pleasantly punctuating the horizon. This sense of proportion has been ruined, not only by the huge Bicentennial Hall but by an awkward and unsightly rehab job done on the New Dorms by the firm of Einhorn Yaffee Prescott in Albany. This renovation closed the gaps between the dorms so that they now form an imposing wall, stripping the buildings of their modernist details in favor of a faux tribute to the College's historic building.

Happily, the College's original plans to have Einhorn Yaffee design Ross Commons did not materialize – and the Tai Soo Kim addition to the aforementioned skyline offers some graceful mitigation of the visual damage to the skyline. And the project points the College to the future. That future not only includes the new Gwathmey-Siegel-designed library, and the resulting conversion of the existing Starr Library, but also several more Commons projects of a similar magnitude. Next up is the Kieran Timberlake-designed Atwater Commons – on paper, an intriguing design. From this development one can hope that each successive effort will grow more bold and beautiful than the last. If so, Tai Soo Kim Partners will reap deserved credit for setting a healthy precedent for a new Middlebury College architecture.

(Donald Maurice Kreis, a 1980 graduate of Middlebury College, spent a year living in Lang Hall before it was gutted and made to look like part of a glitzy ski condo ghetto.)

FIRST CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE PAID
JAFFREY NH
PERMIT NO. 9

AIA VERMONT
1662 MILL BROOK ROAD
FAYSTON, VERMONT 05673

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

MC

calendar

Oct. 10: Joint meeting with AIA New Hampshire at the Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich, VT with an exhibition of NH Furniture Masters. 5:00p.m.

Oct 25: Vermont Planners Association Annual Meeting and Fall Workshops, "Alternative Septic Systems" and Stormwater". Lilac Inn, Brandon, VT - 8:30a.m. -3:00p.m. For further information please call Peter Keating at 802-660-4071 ext. 16 or e-mail pkeating@ccmpo.org.

Nov. 1: Entries for AIA Vermont Design Awards are due at the Chapter Office.

Nov. 9: "Middlebury Day for Architects; Assessing Recent Design". 10:00a.m. at Bicentennial Hall. The College is generously providing lunch for all attendees.

job bank

Planning & Architectural Firm with Offices in Two Great Locations, Vermont and Arizona. Launch your career with a dynamic firm offering opportunities to learn and lead on a wide range of projects in the Northeast and Southwest. We have immediate openings for the following professionals:

Job Captains
Project Managers
Architectural Designers
Architectural CAD Draftspersons

Send brief cover letter and resume to:
tmorgan@browningmoore.com.



Contact
AIA NH
to order your
AIA Documents

Tel: 603-357-2863
Fax: 603-357-0835

Choose your
insurance agent for
the same reason
your clients
choose you:
experience.



Contact:
Tom Mullard
800.371.1063
www.poolepl.com



retreat: the president's report

stu sutcliffe, aia

This summer the members of the board of AIA Vermont got together for a daylong retreat, and a subsequent meeting, to discuss AIA Vermont in a conceptual manner. Questions such as: where are we going, why are we going there and what is our purpose were some of our kick off points.

We talked about what we perceive to be some of our strengths and weaknesses. We talked about what we have and what we would like to have as resources. We talked about the expectations and responsibilities we have as architects and the relationship of our profession to other professions, the general public and society.

We talked about issues that we felt related to our profession. Sustainability and energy efficiency, affordable and elderly housing, sprawl as well as improving the public perception of good design and, by extension, the role of an architect were some of the topics that we as individual architects felt some passion for trying to address.

Finally we talked a lot about how all of this relates to the members of AIA Vermont. We came away with the shared feeling that, through partnering with other organizations, AIA Vermont could be a vehicle for its members to address issues that they care about and that affect the architectural profession. This would be beneficial not only in addressing an issue but also in promoting architects as problem solvers to the public.

We feel that the concept of partnering with other organizations is a key ingredient and has both altruistic and practical benefits. Partnering will allow architects to work with non-architects on a particular issue. A partnering might include engineers, landscape architects, developers and others in fields related directly to our profession but equally important it could include financial organizations, state agencies, grant foundations, universities, members of the general public, etc. This will give an opportunity for variety of input in creating ideas to address an issue and an opportunity to network with others outside the profession.

"Getting out of the tent" by using AIA Vermont as a vehicle for partnering with other organizations and individuals may produce some very positive results that would be difficult to achieve otherwise:

- an issue gets discussion, attention and, in some instances, perhaps resolved,
- non-architect groups and the general public are exposed to architects,
- architects become more of a presence in the larger community,
- respect is nurtured and contacts are made,
- limited resources of each organization are expanded.

At present we are pursuing this approach with Efficiency Vermont with the assistance of architects who are not on the board but have great interest in energy efficiency and sustainability. We are working with them on their upcoming conference, a "brown bag" program to individual firms, explaining Efficiency Vermont and suggestions for programs that would be of interest to architects, outside professionals and the general public.

In summary, we think this is a very interesting avenue to pursue that has benefits for individual architects and non-architects alike, our profession and the general public. Our next board meeting will try to focus on a process for finding out the issues that individual members of AIA Vermont are most interested in pursuing. Your ideas and involvement are necessary and most welcome.

aiaVT reaches out to interns and young architects

chris foster, assoc. aia

(Editor's note: A few years ago, AIAVT decided to actively promote Architect Intern participation in more of our activities. The first logical step was to establish a liaison to deal exclusively with intern and young architect issues. The next logical step was to invite a representative of this group onto the board. Chris Foster accepted this challenge to add to his typical intern responsibilities of learning the profession and working (at least) full-time.)

Earlier this year AIAVT sent out an E-mail Survey to their members requesting that it be forwarded to the Associates and Interns within their firms. This survey was distributed to gain understanding and generate interest in the many important issues and concerns facing Vermont Architect Interns. As it stands there are now 40 Associate AIA members, and 20 more interns that have shown interest in several different areas of the licensing process and involvement in their community.

AIAVT is excited about the possibilities that the Associates can bring to the organization as well as to their communities within Vermont. The Chapter is concentrating on how to involve the Associates in their planning of events and programs.

Vermont is generally divided into three regions; Northern, Central, and Southern, due to the locations of the prominent cities and the difficulty of travelling between these areas. We are looking toward creating study groups and gatherings in these regions for Associates and Interns. These study groups will be designed to bring Associates together in their community with colleagues who are studying for or have recently taken the Architectural Registration Exam. There is already an informal group in Burlington called Burlington Architects and Designers and we look to establish similar groups throughout Vermont. Some of the other ideas that were received by the E-mail Survey were small informal tours of local projects and firms, volunteering time as groups to local charities and social gatherings to bring together the profession in the local area.

AIAVT has graciously accepted housing the AIA Associate Library, which will include ARE Study Guides. These guides could then be checked out by anyone studying for the examination. Although the budget has already been set for this year, AIAVT has been able to appropriate some funds to help facilitate the start of the Associate Library. Once the Guides arrive we will complete an index and post it on the AIAVT web site, when a guide is checked out it will be noted. To check out the guides e-mail AIAVT with the guide of interest and address to send it to. These guides will be loaned for a month at a time, on a first come first serve basis. The borrower will be responsible for either renewing the guide at the end of the month or mailing it back. If anyone has old study guides and would be interested in donating them to the Associate Library please mail them to AIAVT.

This is the first year that the Associates have had a voice in the board to represent their views. Please respond to this article via E-mail with your ideas, comments and concerns about ways to create more interest within the AIA and encourage involvement in the

"Working with Efficiency Vermont helps us
save energy and money for our clients."

Jesse Beck, AIA, NCARB
President
Freeman French Freeman
Burlington, Vermont

Efficiency Vermont
1-888-921-5990
www.efficiencyvermont.com

Efficiency Vermont is your statewide energy efficiency utility. It was created by the Vermont Legislature and the Vermont Public Service Board to help all Vermonters reduce energy costs and protect our environment, and is operated by an independent, not-profit organization.