

president's column

*michael courtney hoffman, aia
2005 president aiaVT*

Hello all,

As many of you may be aware, 2007 is the AIA's 150th Anniversary. In recognition of that significant milestone, the AIA office in Washington, DC has begun to organize a national celebration of architecture and architects.

AIA150 - the name chosen by the National office - has three main goals:

- Enrich the relationship between AIA chapters and local governments.
- Promote AIA architects as leaders in articulating and championing a vision for the future of our communities.
- Redefine the image of AIA architects as leaders who care about their communities and devote talents to improving them.

Hunter Ulf (1998 aiaVT President) has volunteered to act as the AIA150 Celebration "Champion" (again, AIA National's term). The aiaVT Board has given him the charge to pull together an all-star committee of the Chapter's Past Presidents and to work with the current aiaVT Board to create a statewide program for the coming year.

We are just gearing up. We had a very good session with the AIA New England Board in Boston on January 31 where the regions' chapters shared ideas. Hunter is calling together a meeting of Past Presidents for Feb 16th. Additionally, Lauren Davis and I will be meeting with the AIA150 National coordinators to discuss funding opportunities while we are attending Grassroots in Washington, DC on Feb 8-10. Please stay tuned - we will be asking for your help to make this a huge success!

cont.

aiaVT



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Executive Director: Hanne Williams, Hon. AIAVT
aiavt@madriverv.com

1662 Mill Brook Road
Fayston, Vermont 05673
p 802.496.3761
f 802.496.3294

Architecture & ideology

Roger Kimbal

This essay is adapted from the keynote lecture delivered at the Yale University School of Architecture on November 8, 2002 as part of the two-day symposium "Eisenman, Krier: Two Ideologies." An exhibition of the same name, focusing on Peter Eisenman's "House IV" and Léon Krier's "Atlantis Project," opened on November 4 and remains on view at the Yale School of Architecture until February 7.

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"The problem of architecture as I see it ... is the problem of all art—the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form."

—Professor Otto Silenus,
in Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall*

This meticulous observance of "pure styles" is a mark of failing energy in imagination; it is a mark, also, of an inadequacy in thought: of a failure to define the nature of style in general. We cling in architecture to the pedantries of humanism, because we do not grasp the bearing upon architecture of the humanist ideal.

—Geoffrey Scott,
The Architecture of Humanism

cont.

2.06:1

CORA's inaugural meeting

5:00 pm February 24th
Yesterday Design/Build School (496-5545)

The Congress of Residential Architecture (CORA) will convene the first meeting of its Vermont chapter at the Yesterday School in Warren, Vermont. All people interested in residential architecture are invited, especially architects.

Initiated by architects specializing in residential custom homes, the growth of CORA has become a nation-wide phenomenon with endorsements from the AIA, Taunton Press and Hanley-Wood's Residential Architecture magazine. Chapters are being formed in every state, and they have just had their first mini-convention in Coral Gables, Florida.

While CORA is meant to embrace all things residential, special focus committees have been formed. To date there is action in the following areas:

- Media
- Production Housing
- Sustainable Design
- Image
- Education
- Alternative Practices

For further detail on the activities of each committee, go to www.corarchitects.org

Please come to this inaugural meeting of CORA Vermont. We need thoughtful architects and designers to help shape the direction of this fledgling initiative. And we need members of aiaVT to help inform and collaborate with this constituency.

*Refreshments will be served (hey, it's Friday!)
RSVP: John Connell at,
connell@madriver.com or 496-5546*

aiaVT welcomes

stephen kredell, aia of burlington

Speaking of Grassroots. Lauren, Hanne, and I will be attending this annual legislative and leadership conference, and we hope to receive the usual warm welcome by our congressional delegation. There are a number of issues of particular interest to the profession under consideration, and we hope to add our voices in support. I will have a full report for next month's column.

One last note. I'd like to thank Michael Gohl for years and years of service as the aiaVT State Government Network representative. He has been our link to the wider world of legislative and governmental actions. He has stepped down, and we are currently without representation. This network is a lifeline of contacts within AIA components all over the United States and is a huge resource. If you have an interest in the position, please contact Hanne or me.

Till next month.

I was delighted to learn that my presence at Yale's recent symposium about the American architect Peter Eisenman and the Luxembourg-born architect Léon Krier was to be under the aegis of my late friend Brendan Gill. [1] Brendan was a distinguished alumnus of Yale—I trust other alumni will forgive that pleonasm—and he was also widely admired as a keen, lively writer about architecture for The New Yorker. Brendan was a merry soul. It is pleasing to speculate about what his reaction would have been to the news that Robert A. M. Stern, the Dean of the School of Architecture, had decided not only to ask me to introduce this symposium, but also to denominate me, if but momentarily, the Brendan Gill Lecturer. I suspect that his response would have been one of amusement—spiced, perhaps, with a soupçon of anxiety. Since I happened to be in New Haven while this exhibition of Mr. Eisenman's and Mr. Krier's work from the 1970s and 1980s was being installed, I took advantage of the coincidence to get a glimpse of the exhibition as it went up. It is one of the privileges of being a critic that one often has the opportunity to drop in as an exhibition is being mounted. There is always a certain excitement, a certain freshness, about seeing an exhibition in this state of morning dishabille, as it were. The bustle of technicians fixing labels, touching up the paint, making some late decisions about exactly how that last row of pictures should be hung is somehow more energizing than distracting. It's like a glimpse backstage at a theatrical performance, which to my mind tends rather to enhance than dissipate the magic of the performance.

I thought about Brendan as I picked my way gingerly among the ladders, drills, track-lighting, and masking tape. I wish that he could have accompanied me. He would, I think, have had a smile for the images on the wall and a twinkle in his eye for the symposium as a whole. Brendan liked handsome pictures, and he had a healthy appetite for incongruity. He would not have been disappointed on either score. The welcoming image in the exhibition is a copy of one of Mr. Krier's classical fantasies. It is a sort of acropolis populated by friends and patrons besporting themselves in contemporary garb: Puvis de Chavannes with couture by Ralph Lauren, sets by Winckelmann. It would, I think, have brought Brendan up short. "Do you suppose it is meant seriously?" he might have whispered, amusement once again competing with anxiety.

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2.06:2



architecture flexes its muscles in rural alabama

m. hunter ulf, aia

The late architect Samuel Mockbee and Auburn University professor, D.K. Ruth created a college-level architecture program in the early 1990's that incorporated the practice of design-build, providing students with hands-on opportunities to design and build something real.

Mockbee, then a partner with Mockbee & Coker, designed award-winning houses for the affluent. During this time, he began wrestling with strong personal convictions that the profession of architecture should "challenge the status quo into making responsible environmental and social changes." Mockbee chose Hale County, Alabama, an area just southwest of Birmingham's industrial area with a poverty rate of forty percent, as the location to implement change through his design-build program. Far from the distractions of the Auburn University's campus, the program became known as the Rural Studio.

My introduction to the Rural Studio was through the glossy images of buildings and stark landscapes found in two books by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley. There was something about these images that was both pleasing and disturbing. They were unlike typical images that portrayed architecture. These images captured the plight of the people in them as well as the building's style. The materials used in construction were represented in honest and unadulterated

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Now, Brendan liked his bit of kitsch as much as the next chap, but he preferred it light and gently self-mocking. There is a mocking quality to some of the images on view in this exhibition; there is certainly a mocking quality in some of the architectural visions that the exhibition represents; but it is a mockery directed outward, toward the viewer, toward the public, not inward toward the maker. The great social theorist Phineas Taylor Barnum is alleged to have remarked that "There's a sucker born every minute." Although a proof of this proposition awaits definitive formulation, "Eisenman, Krier: Two Ideologies" deserves an honored place in the annals of corroborative incident.

Still, there are a lot of fetching images on view in this exhibition. Mr. Krier is more than an accomplished architectural draftsman: he is a brilliantly evocative artist whose classicizing fantasies are a delight to the eye and a spur to the imagination. His drawings are something more—something other, at any rate—than attractive building instructions or architectural elevations. They are tranquil portraits of—I was going to say of a vanished world, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they are

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2.06:3



ways. Found items were combined and assembled to create a simple elegance. There were buildings made from hay bales, salvaged auto glass, and carpet tiles. I was wrestling with my own convictions that my work could benefit people and communities beyond the boundaries of the buildings I designed, and I felt compelled to see the Rural Studio's work firsthand and gain a better understanding of architecture's real power.

I rendezvoused with three other architects in Birmingham who shared my interest, and we drove our rented minivan southwest toward Greensboro, Alabama, the closest town to the Rural Studio that offered accommodations. The warm, moist air of Alabama was a welcome relief from the remnants of snow and cold in my home of Northern New England. As we left the outskirts of Birmingham and began seeing the low gentle hills of the rural countryside, the group's conversation became thin and eventually stopped. The beauty of the landscape and the ever-increasing signs of poverty and basic subsistence mesmerized us.

Awaking the next day to a bountiful southern breakfast provided by our inn-keeper, we planned our tour and began by visiting the home of Jimmy Lee Matthews, known locally as Music Man. Explaining to the group upon arrival that his motor scooter had broken down, Music Man climbed into our van, and we drove to the grocery store for eggs, milk, bread, dog food, sardines, and canned mackerel. I offered to buy the groceries and he gratefully accepted. His 600-square foot house was tall and narrow and typical of the southern style known as Shotgun. It was as though materials found in the clutter of ramshackle buildings and trash on the site had reorganized themselves and come together to form an architectural statement of accomplishment and logic. There was hog fence decorated with colorful panels of corrugated metal and fiberglass, and salvaged road signs creating a screened porch. The wood plank siding was placed vertically to blend with the surrounding tall pines. The clutter of salvaged stereo equipment and heaps of clothing inside obscured the warmth of the interior's wood

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reconstructions of a world that never quite existed, indeed that never could exist, but whose beauty, whose seductiveness, lies precisely in that mixture of impossibility and exquisite delineation.

Mr. Eisenman of course does not go in much for seducing his viewers—not, anyway, with promises of any normal gratification. But considered simply as drawings—that is, considered apart from any alleged connection with the art of architecture—the plans and sketches for the unbuilt “House IV” possess their own beauty and fascination. It is naturally a very different sort of fascination from that exerted by Mr. Krier's drawings. They are cooler, less sumptuous, less immediately welcoming than Mr. Krier's classical essays. They bear the stamp not of an artist's hand but of a puzzle-maker's ingenuity, and they do this by design. Mr. Krier elaborates a way of life; Mr. Eisenman analyzes—or seems to analyze—a geometry. His drawings are fiercely, indeed ostentatiously, cerebral. It is, from one point of view, good fun and, it should be acknowledged, Mr. Eisenman expresses his vision with considerable elegance. A cube is presented; it is

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2.06:4

floors and walls. A bed, TV's, and pots and pans rolled on a custom metal track system above our heads to take advantage of the room's height. A curved extension made from corrugated roofing and translucent panels off the rear of the house provided bath space and pleasant views of the wooded property. The house felt whimsical and seemed to capture the personality of our host through its rustic and colorful presence. Music Man took pleasure in showing us every detail of his home including pictures stuck to the refrigerator of the students responsible for its design and construction, and his indoor plumbing. We thanked Music Man for his kind hospitality and stopped for lunch, barbequed ribs, at Mustang Oil, the local gas station, on our way to Mason's Bend.

Mason's Bend is a small, tightly gathered community of four extended families. Most, if not all, members of this community live below the poverty level. Groups of kids were riding their bikes on dusty roads winding through crumbling shanties and rusty trailer homes. Dogs roamed hungry and unleashed. Laundry hung from lines, and music drifted through the air from a stereo in a parked car. Many homes appeared to lack electricity and plumbing. A young man was cooking a raccoon for lunch, while his brother nursed a 16 oz. Colt 45. I was not familiar with this part of America. However, the people of Mason's Bend greeted us as though we had been there before, and seemed to pay little attention to the fact that we were from another place and culture.

Samuel Mockbee brought his students to Mason's bend in 1994 to build their first house. It was constructed with hay bales and tailored to the needs of its occupants by providing living space and bedrooms for an elderly couple and their three grandchildren. The most striking feature of the house is its wide, sweeping porch that creates the feel of a southern antebellum mansion. In the front yard a stone smoke house stands with permanent distinction, and upon closer inspection turns out to be built from salvaged concrete chunks. The roof is made of salvaged road signs. Bottles of varying sizes are inserted between chunks of concrete to bring soft, gentle light to the building's interior.



cont.

bisected; it is hollowed out; the cube is rotated; inverted; elaborated and transformed by a series of algorithms. This prodigy Mr. Eisenman tells us is a house. Some people believe him. He says "House IV" is "an attempt to alienate the individual from the known way in which he perceives and understands his environment." Rich Canadians stand in awe and shovel money his way. Universities appoint him to the faculty. Learned seminars are devoted to dissecting his importance. How it would have gratified Mr. Barnum.

Alice Roosevelt Longworth famously said that "If you can't say something good about someone, sit right here by me." I confess that I have always harbored a sneaking fondness for Alice. But by and large Brendan belonged to the opposite school. He tended to look on the bright side. He much preferred liking things to disliking them. I have no doubt that he would have found a good deal to like in "Eisenman, Krier: Two Ideologies." In purely visual terms there is a good deal to like. But I suspect that, like me, he would have greeted the proposition that this was an exhibition whose chief concern was with architecture with a certain scepticism.

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2.06:5



Down the road, a low-slung house with deep roof overhangs and a large living room window looks as though it collided with a large, crumpled cracker box. The house was the last design that Mockbee was involved with before succumbing to leukemia in 2001. The house is made of stacked carpet tiles, providing thermal insulation and water-tightness. It is a source of immense pride for its owner, Lucy Harris, and a tourist attraction for people able to find it. Lucy's father, the recipient of another Rural Studio house, donated a piece of land nearby for a small, open-air building that serves as a community gathering spot, offering picnic tables and space to spend time with neighbors. Its roof of salvaged auto glass and metal sits atop rammed earth walls, giving the building a transparent connection to the community around it, and a feeling of greater volume inside. There were still many in Mason's Bend who had not benefited from the Rural Studio, but it seemed as though their pride had been lifted as they saw their community appreciated by those outside of it.

The Rural Studio's home in Newbern does not invoke the image of a collegiate architecture program in its rusted, tin-clad hay barn. In fact, except for a small sign hanging above the front door, the building looks largely abandoned. However, inside this building, fifteen second-year students spend a semester designing and building a project and learning the social and ethical responsibilities associated with architecture. About fifteen fifth-year students spend their entire final year designing and building a community project. A firehouse across the street was a prominent example of both a community enhancement project and the over-ambitions of youth. The team of students who designed the firehouse was still hard at work building it roughly eight months after they graduated, and had no idea when they would be finished. This scenario is not uncommon at the Rural Studio, as most projects take far longer than a year to conceive and build. In the Rural Studio's early years, fifth year students would choose their own thesis projects, but as the focus of these projects became more socially significant, community leaders began coming to the Rural Studio seeking design and construction help. This became evident as we continued our tour.



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Why the scepticism? I believe that the subtitle of this symposium—"Two Ideologies"—may have a useful clue to at least part of the answer. It is, I think, a spectacularly apt subtitle. For with these two architects we really are dealing not simply with radically different approaches to architecture but with two opposing ideologies. The literature accompanying this symposium suggests that the planners were interested chiefly in exploring that opposition—exploring, that is to say, the discontinuities that define Mr. Eisenman's and Mr. Krier's relationship to the tradition of modernism and to each other. I will have something to say about that in due course. First I invite you to ponder what it might mean to say that an architect espouses an ideology.

Of course architects, like lesser mortals, might espouse or exhibit an ideology in their capacity as individual political agents. But what does it mean to say that an architect, considered in his capacity as an architect, espouses an ideology? Think about it: Did Brunelleschi have an ideology? Did Alberti? Did Stanford White? They certainly had opinions about what made good architecture: they embraced some things and

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2.06:6



Traveling through Newbern, Thomaston, Marion, Greensboro, and Antioch, we saw prominent examples of Rural Studio work in the form of baseball field backstops, prototype housing, farm stands, bridges, park pavilions, public toilets, community counseling centers, playgrounds, and a Baptist Church. Many of these projects were fresh and modern, creating a striking contrast to their surroundings. They were refined, and slightly edgy projects that exhibited creativity and sensibility. They stood out as community objects of pride and acknowledgement that people

Criticism of the Rural Studio has been sparse in rural Alabama. Many project recipients believe that the students were sent by God to perform the work of miracles. Many of the students that graduate from the Rural Studio go on to focus their careers on activism and social responsibility. The people of rural Alabama go on with a renewed sense of pride and hope that their lives will be better. They were both experiencing first hand the power of architecture to change lives.

disparaged others. But having an opinion is not the same thing as espousing an architectural ideology. Modernism was notoriously an architecture that never left home without a manifesto, and doubtless some practitioners of modernist architecture would count as ideological architects. Or one might point to Albert Speer whose grandiose neo-classicism was self-consciously put in the service of an ideology. It is perhaps significant in this context that Mr. Krier has had some admiring things to say about Speer's architecture—not, I hasten to add, because of its association with the Nazis but because of its effort to revivify, in hypertrophied form, a certain version of neo-classicism.

But what, to step back for a moment, is an ideology? We live at a time when we are regularly assured that "everything is political," that everyone and everything has an ideology, that no point of view is "innocent," that "truth" is merely an honorific conferred by power, and so forth. But let's leave that self-contradictory, mind-numbing lit.-crit.-shlick to one side. It doesn't bring us any closer to understanding the title "Eisenman, Krier: Two Ideologies."

The word *idéologie* seems to have been coined by the French nobleman Destutt de Tracy in 1796. Destutt, a follower of the materialist philosopher Condillac, had set out to describe the process by which ideas came to consciousness. He was a sort of proto-sociologist. But although the word, like so many dubious intellectual imports, is of French origin, it did not acquire its full quota of owliness until it was adopted and groomed by the Germans. Marx and Engels did more than anyone to popularize the term. It was while at school with the Marxists that the word "ideology" turned nasty and developed teeth. Characteristically, the word acquired a dual meaning: overtly, it was just a fancy term for describing someone's world view, but by insinuation it also cast a negative penumbra, a suggestion of rigidity or "false-consciousness," as the Marxists say. More and more, "an ideology" was understood to describe an unfortunate piece of mental—and even moral—baggage that one's opponents labored under but which did not much bother right-thinking—by which I mean Left-leaning—souls.

The word "ideology" has never quite lost its Marxist accent; it continues to carry with it the hint of subterranean forces at work—forces that only the initiated are in a position to discern and emancipate themselves from. Indeed, that aura of impermeable

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2.06:7

'learning by design' update

The LBD VT Committee has made substantial progress. We have designed and printed an information brochure that explains the LBD concept and how we can best engage children in the design process with architects. Last October, we had a booth at the Vermont NEA conference and successfully contacted a number of educators interested in having architect volunteers create programs in their schools and help LBD become a reality. We are putting together a seminar for this month (details follow) to bring architects and educators together, where we will present the LBD concept and explain more about our goals for 2006.

Presentation Seminar for Architects and Educators

The LBD VT committee of aiaVT has been working this past year to put together a program to bring an introduction of architectural principles and design into the classrooms of Vermont public schools. The program plans to have volunteer architects visit schools in their communities to conduct hands-on activities with individual classrooms from K through grade 12. The workshop duration could vary from one class period to multiple days and the content would be tailored to the individual architect and teacher's interests and goals. A brochure, designed by the LBD VT committee, further describing what LBD VT is all about, has been sent to all aiaVT members.

We have had good response from teachers in support of the LBD VT program, and now we need to develop a pool of interested architects to match with interested schools. To this end, we have scheduled a seminar for architects and educators to provide more information about the program and to present experiences of several architects who have conducted workshops in Vermont.

The seminar is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15, 2006 from 6:30-8:30pm at the South Burlington High School, Multi-Purpose Room #226 (second floor) at the corner of Dorset Street and Kennedy Drive in South Burlington. From 189 North or South, take Exit 14E. Make an immediate right onto Dorset Street. Follow Dorset St. past the University Mall and make a left turn just before Kennedy Drive into the So. Burlington High School parking lot.

Refreshments will be provided.

We hope you will attend. If you cannot attend our presentation, but are still interested in the program, you may contact us by calling or e-mailing Hanne Williams at aiaVT, and she will put you in touch with our LBD VT committee chairperson.

a vermont chapter of sda

marsha wilmot, sda

A Vermont Chapter of SDA

Marsha Wilmot, SDA of Black River Design Architects is interested in starting a Vermont Chapter of SDA. Please join aiaVT in supporting the initiation of a Vermont Chapter. If you know of someone in your office who would benefit by joining SDA, please share this article with him or her.

Who is SDA?

For over 45 years, the Society for Design Administration (SDA), an affiliate of The American Institute of Architects, has promoted education and 'best practices' in management and professional standards of design firm administrative personnel. SDA Membership consists of over 700 members and stretches across the United States and Canada. SDA is comprised of personnel in the design profession, including architecture, engineering, construction, landscape and interior design.

What is SDA?

SDA enhances the professional development and personal growth of its members, and as a result, the development and growth of their respective companies occurs. To accomplish this, SDA provides a host of networking opportunities, as well as educational resources in the areas of: Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Marketing, Office Administration, and Project Management. In SDA's affiliation with AIA and partnering with other related design organizations, the common goal is to improve design firm administration and practice management and aid members in their career growth.

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knowingness is an important reason that "ideology" is such a popular word in the academy. Still, continual use has smoothed some of its rough edges. One can thus have a title like "Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies" without people thinking you are being rude.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt observes that an ideology differs from a simple opinion in that an ideology claims to possess "the key to history" or "intimate knowledge" of "hidden universal laws." Dilute this a bit further and you wind up with ideology in the sense we have it here: "Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies"—that is, two efforts to recast architecture on the basis of a specialized program or agenda that takes its cue as much from extra-architectural considerations as from architectural ones. What is the nature of those programs or agendas? In the case of Mr. Eisenman, I believe, it revolves largely around an ambition to uncover a hitherto concealed "essence" of architecture. In the case of Mr. Krier—at least in his work during the years that this symposium focuses on—the ideology revolves around an attempt to redefine architecture as a sort of classicizing mythopoesis or mythmaking.

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2.06: 8

aiaVT is edited by Andrea Murray, AIA. Published views are the author's and not necessarily the views of AIA Vermont or any other organization.

Please send articles, notices, letters, and graphic submissions to:

Andrea Murray, AIA
Bread Loaf Corporation
Architects, Planners and Builders
1293 Route 7 South
Middlebury, Vermont 05753
802-388-9871 ext. 239
amurray@breadloaf.com

AIA Vermont reserves the right to edit articles for available space and determine appropriate content prior to inclusion. Submissions must be received by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

Publications available through SDA include the National SDA Newsletter Behind the Design, Chapter Newsletters, a Handbook for Design Office Administration, and a Handbook of Forms & Letters for Design Professionals.

An SDA website rich with informational pages from each domain and informative white papers addresses contemporaneous issues affecting the A/E/C industry. An active listserv enables SDA member firms to learn about current best practices to make a firm more efficient, to test new policies and procedures on other professionals before implementation, or to research issues specific to practice management in the A/E/C forum.

What is the value of SDA Membership?

SDA's mission is to promote the exchange of ideas and to educate our members in the related disciplines of design firm administration. SDA is an elite organization that addresses the issues, concerns, and educates its members in all aspects of design firm administration. If you are employed as an administrator in the A/E/C industry, then you should become a member!

Our primary objectives are:

- To enhance practice administration through personal growth and continued education
- To encourage career growth and excellence through a Certified Design Administration (SDA/C) program
- To contribute to the development of office systems and materials
- To work with institutions of higher education to establish a curriculum for the training of design field personnel
- To cooperate with civic organizations whose undertakings are non-profit, non-political, and of vital interest to the community
- To enhance the network of our members and their firms within the A/E/C community

cont.

Let's start with Mr. Eisenman. "House IV" is one of six similarly abstract houses that he designed in the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that they are known only by Roman numerals adds to their forbidding aura. A book called Houses of Cards, published in the late 1980s, is devoted to these works. In an essay he published in this volume, Mr. Eisenman writes that "the essence of the act of architecture is the dislocation of an ever-reconstituting metaphysic of architecture."

In case that was unclear, Mr. Eisenman goes on to explain that the designs for the six houses were all "governed by the intent to define the act of architecture as the dislocation of consequent reconstitution of an ever-accruing metaphysic of architecture." At this stage of his career, anyway, Mr. Eisenman was very fond of the word "metaphysic." In the course of his essay, readers are introduced not only to the "metaphysic of architecture" but also to the "metaphysic of the center," the "metaphysic of the house," even the "metaphysic of dining."

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2.06:9



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- **Certification Program (SDA/C)**
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- **BTD White Papers**
 SDA's White Papers are educational tools for SDA members. Posted quarterly, they offer an exchange of knowledge in the six areas of design administration: human resources, office administration, project management, finance, information technology, and marketing.
- **BTD News**
 The BTD News highlights member's accomplishments and activities. This can include press releases for individuals, member firms, or Chapters; articles written by members of news (rather than educational or informational) nature; or announcements that are applicable for members.
- **Monthly eWire**
 Members receive the SDA electronic eWire each month. The eWire offers members information about upcoming events or meetings in addition to industry related issues. Reading the eWire is a great way to stay tuned.

cont.

It would, I think, be a mistake to regard such formidable phrases as extraneous verbal curlicues. The point is that experience of Peter Eisenman's architecture is partly a rhetorical experience. Architecture is not itself a verbal medium, as Mr. Eisenman sometimes pretends, but his own architectural efforts are incomplete without the accompanying text. When we encounter a stairway that leads nowhere, as we do at the Wexner Arts Center in Columbus, Ohio, we need his help to understand that we are being given a lesson in linguistic futility. Otherwise we might foolishly conclude that it was just a stairway that led nowhere and wonder about the sanity of the chap who paid the architect's bill.

Mr. Eisenman was once a recherché taste. But he has, in recent years, become something of a celebrity, and so his little lessons have become quite familiar. For the benefit of those who have not experienced his act, however, I feel I should provide at least one full-fledged example. Regarding the "metaphysic of dining," Mr. Eisenman tells us that "House III" and "House IV" explore an alternative process of making occupiable form, ... a process specifically developed to operate as freely as possible

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2.06:10

Bylin's Roof Ice Melt System

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from functional considerations. From a traditional point of view, several columns "intrude on" and "disrupt" the living and dining areas as a result of this process... . Nonetheless, these dislocations... have, according to the occupants of the house, changed the dining experience in a real and, more importantly, unpredictable fashion.

Being of a charitable disposition, I do not propose to analyze this passage. Instead, I present it as an artwork in its own right, something that is better admired for its autonomous beauty than picked over for its meaning. Such passages are best regarded as rhetorical adjuncts of Mr. Eisenman's drawings and buildings: frames without whose support his work could not even appear to us as architecture. Still, it does seem worth noting that although the occupants of Mr. Eisenman's houses may have found that his provocatively placed columns have changed—even changed "unpredictably"—their experience of living and dining, Mr. Eisenman does not say that their experience was made any more pleasant. Far from it. One of the main goals of Mr. Eisenman's architecture is to subvert anything so bourgeois as comfort or intelligibility. As he puts it, his houses attempt to have little to do with the traditional and existing metaphysics of the

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administration of such businesses. They shall pay Chapter and National dues. They shall have the right to attend all meetings of SDA, to speak and take part in the discussions thereat, and to serve as committee members. They shall not have the right to vote, to serve as a committee chair, or to hold Chapter or National office.

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house, the physical and psychological gratification associated with the traditional form of the house, ... in order to initiate a search for those possibilities of dwelling that may have been repressed by that metaphysic.

With respect to leaving behind "physical and psychological gratification," I think we can judge Mr. Eisenman's houses an unqualified success. As for "dwelling"—well, the word has a gratifying Heideggerian ring to it. But what about the "repressed possibilities" of dwelling? Could it be that there are some things that should be repressed? Might it be the case that, if there are such things as repressed possibilities of dwelling, it is to our benefit that they stay repressed? I suppose it could be said that Mr. Eisenman exposed one repressed possibility of dwelling when he left a few holes in the second story floor of one of his houses. In that case, one repressed possibility was a broken leg or a broken neck, and the occupants of the house, as we read in a recent article about Mr. Eisenman in The New York Times, quickly saw to it that this "possibility of dwelling" was firmly re-repressed through the expediency of some metal grates fitted over the holes.

Let us turn now to Mr. Krier. At first blush, he seems to present a kinder, gentler face to the world than Mr. Eisenman. At least, it is a less cerebral face. Mr. Krier's stairways lead somewhere, his floors are solid, his façades have the pleasing aspect of old

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friends. He offers a Masterpiece-Theatre sort of coziness: stately homes, lots of pillars and classical cornices, and one assumes that the servant problem is well under control. If Peter Eisenman is engaged in a search for the essence of architecture, Mr. Krier is engaged in a search for its Arcady, a dreamy version of its idealized form. Although the portion of the Yale exhibition devoted to Mr. Krier's work is centered on The Atlantis Project, an unbuilt, classically decorated retreat for artists and intellectuals, it includes a wide range of drawings by Mr. Krier. Most pertain to unbuilt projects. Of course, many visionary architects have specialized in unbuilt projects: one thinks of Ledoux, Boulée, Piranesi, and others. Furnishing the imagination with possibilities—even, if I may so put it, impossible possibilities—has been a fertile source of architectural activity since the Tower of Babel—or perhaps even the bowers populating the Garden of Eden. Still, Mr. Krier embraces the unbuilt with a special passion.

A common thread running through many of his projects is rejection: rejection not only of modernist architecture but of modern reality. It's a small-is-beautiful, natural materials, brown-rice, and no-curtain-wall sort of philosophy—attractive to elites who can afford to dream those dreams and why not? Some twenty years ago, Mr. Krier famously summed up this ethic of rejection when he declared: "A responsible architect cannot possibly build today. . . . Building can only mean a greater or smaller degree of collaboration in a civilized society's process of self-destruction." Mr. Krier has apparently repudiated that statement. Nevertheless, it underscores a permanent temptation to which his approach to architecture is susceptible. Nor was that statement a solitary aberration. "I can only make Architecture," he said in another manifesto-like statement from the 1970s, "because I do not build. I do not build because I am an Architect."

With those declarations in mind, it is interesting to consider the developments that Mr. Krier collaborated on in Seaside, Florida, and Poundbury, England: do such New Urbanist experiments count as upper-case-A Architecture, lower-case-a architecture, or something else entirely? And what about Mr. Krier? Was he an upper-case- or lower-case-a architect while working on those projects? Maybe he wasn't an architect at all, but something else entirely? And here's a further worry: if only those who do not build can make Architecture, what about those who have built? Can they go back to being upper-case-A Architects after a certain period of abstinence? Or is being an upper-case-A Architect like virginity: a quality that, once lost, is gone forever?

I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions. But I raise them because I think they point to an element in Léon Krier's work that has not perhaps been sufficiently noticed. Mr. Krier has often been described as an historicist: he is that. But he is an historicist with a powerful commitment to purity, to an idealism that is moral as much as architectural. Throughout Mr. Krier's work there is a conscious effort to evoke a more humanized future by reimagining the past. Mr. Krier dislikes the word "utopian." But there is a reason that one finds it cropping up so often in discussions of his work. In the face of an unsatisfactory reality—a reality populated by ugly buildings, too many people, and pollution: in other words, our reality—he composes highly personal versions of tradition that seek more to liberate the imagination than to describe a definite task. One attractive side of this vision is to be found in all those pretty pictures of classically faced buildings. I have not myself been to Seaside or Poundbury, but I am willing to believe that those boutique showpieces are plenty mignon, too.

But in fact those developments represent Mr. Krier in a conciliatory, compromising mood. And according to some reports, he was not at all happy with the results at Poundbury: too many concessions to vulgarity. In any event, more typical—more typical of the work highlighted by this symposium, anyway—are fantasies like The Atlantis Project or his plan to scratch Washington, D.C. and turn it into four Georgetown-sized villages in which pedestrian traffic would be moderated by such expedients as flooding the Washington Mall.

If there seems to be a touch of megalomania about such projects, well, Mr. Krier once spoke of facing up to "the colossal and almost inhuman task of global ecological reconstruction." Around the same time, he also remarked that the criterion for his work is contained in a question: "If I had to design the whole world, what would I do?" This was a contingency that Mr. Krier, only half-jokingly, described as "not improbable." I have rehearsed what I take to be certain central aspects of Mr. Eisenman's ideology and Mr. Krier's ideology in order to delineate the basic shape or thrust of their architectural vision. I have left a lot out of account. For example, there are other aspects to Mr. Eisenman's activity besides the search for the essence of architecture. A sceptical observer, noting such things as the holes in the floors of his house, the small windows at ankle level in offices he designed, the stairways that go nowhere, the plans he offers for Ground Zero that include offices buildings that look like half-squashed paper bags, might wonder whether Mr. Eisenman was really in earnest.

Years ago, Philip Johnson extolled postmodernism for having insinuated "the giggle" into architecture. Is it possible that Mr. Eisenman—who after all is a late beneficiary of Philip Johnson's activities as an architectural impresario—is it possible that he, too, is a giggle-making postmodernist? Only, having found the all slots for cheerful historical pastiche occupied, he took the next best opening and specialized in angry looking send-ups of Corbusier and Terragni? Is Mr. Eisenman, too, in the business of purveying architectural spoofs? Perhaps, like other sensible people, he knows deep down that Jacques Derrida is a French fog-making-machine whose opinions about language and architecture are no less risible than they are mystifying? I mention it as a possibility worth considering.

Mr. Krier is a bit harder to get in focus. Having started his professional life as a disciple of James Stirling, he seems to have vacillated between the role of architectural gadfly or prophet—"Repent! The end of the curtain wall is night!"—and the role of pragmatic urban planner who is trying to get the Prince of Wales's business done.

It was one of the assumptions of the Yale symposium that in the 1970s and 1980s Mr. Eisenman and Mr. Krier were both, in their disparate ways, reacting against modernism. Maybe they were. But I am not sure how illuminating that observation is. I mean, at least since Robert Venturi inverted Mies van der Rohe and proclaimed the gospel of "Less is a bore," elite architects have been hopping onto the anti-modernist bandwagon faster than you can say Colin Rowe. And some of them have done hugely attractive work. But Mr. Eisenman and Mr. Krier stand out or stand apart from most anti-modernist architects, and so I am not sure how instructive it would be to explore their "dissimilar perceptions of history," as the program for the Yale symposium invited us to do.

How else can we understand their activity? One possibly fruitful parallel that occurred to me comes from the world of ethology, of animal behavior. Readers of Konrad Lorenz's fascinating books on the subject will remember his discussion of what he calls a "vacuum activity." A vacuum activity is instinctual behavior that occurs when an animal, deprived of its normal surroundings and objects, nevertheless "goes through the motions" of some activity typical of its species. Lorenz provides several examples from the bird kingdom. Many city dwellers who own dogs will have witnessed another example. Long deprived of bones and dirt, a city-living dog will pretend to bury a nonexistent bone in nonexistent dirt in the corner of a room. Burying bones is instinctive behavior for dogs, and a bone-less, dirt-less life is just not to be borne. After a certain period of time sans bones and sans dirt, this behavior "discharges" itself, in Lorenz's term, and we find Fido pawing earnestly at the carpet in the corner living room.

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I wonder whether the intriguing concept of a vacuum activity sheds some light on the relevant work of Mr. Eisenman and Mr. Krier. After all, much of what we are presented with in this exhibition is unbuilt—surely a frustrating contingency for men whose profession is building things. Just as a dog “buries” a nonexistent “bone,” so Mr. Eisenman “designs” a “house” and Mr. Krier “plans” a fantasy-island hideaway. I am sorry that we cannot engage Konrad Lorenz as a consultant in this case. I suspect he might discover some useful extensions to his idea of a vacuum activity. Is there, for example, such a thing as a half-vacuum activity—just a bit of air hissing in—in which, for example, a dog has a bone but no dirt, or an architect builds a house that turns out to be uninhabitable? I do not know. It is a question that demands more research, and probably a government grant. I cannot help thinking that the idea of the vacuum activity may be illuminating for architectural ideologies in which futility is budgeted in as either a basic design element or as a necessary adjunct of its impracticality.

The issue of futility brings me—a bit late admittedly—to my own title. I’ve settled here on “Architecture & Ideology.” Originally, though, I had something more baroque. When I accepted Dean Stern’s invitation to participate in the Yale symposium, he instantly asked for a title for my remarks. After a bit of cogitation, I wrote back and offered “Is There Architecture After Modernism?” I thought that might be appropriate for a discussion of work that is not only self-consciously anti-modernist but that also raises the question of the future of architecture, in one instance by subverting traditional architectural practice, in the other by fetishizing it. As an afterthought, I told Dean Stern that I’d considered proposing, in deference to Mr. Eisenman, something like—please note the parentheses—“(Re)positioning Architecture: (Post)modernism, (Re)presentation, and the Discourses of (Dis)play.” Dean Stern replied that he favored the longer title—it was, he suggested, “more provocative.” I saw his point. “Is There Architecture After Modernism?” is moderately provocative because it raises the possibility that there isn’t any architecture after modernism, which is clearly absurd. But the longer title has the advantage of total unintelligibility, which I know is in some circles a powerful recommendation.

Still, that original title was not merely flippant. The first bit poses what I think is a serious question. My answer to the question is “No, there isn’t architecture after modernism—if by ‘modernism’ we understand not a certain denuded style of building but rather the social, economic, and political givens of contemporary life.” Various English statesmen, from Gladstone to Sir William Harcourt, have been credited with the observation that “We are all socialists now.” Alas, you might say—well, I would say “alas.” But there it is. That is simply a statement of how things are. You might lament it but you cannot change it.

Similarly, there is an important sense in which we are all modernists now, Mr. Krier as much as Gordon Bunshaft. It doesn’t matter whether you favor curtain walls or Corinthian columns, jeweled concrete or cedar shakes. The issue is not modernism or anti-modernism but good architecture versus bad architecture. If the architecture we have been accustomed to calling modernist errs in the direction of severity and hyper-rationalism, much of the architecture that has arisen to challenge it has erred in the direction of silliness, grim or fatuous as the case may be.

Which is worse? Stock in the modernist enterprise has been unnaturally depressed for some time now, and so it is worth reminding ourselves that there are plenty of great modernist success stories—the Yale Art Gallery by Louis Kahn, for example, or the Yale Center for British Art, its younger cousin across the street.

I believe that if we are to get a fruitful perspective on the opposition named in the title “Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies,” we need to put that opposition in a wider context.

One way of doing that allows me to introduce the hero of this lecture, the English architect and architectural historian Geoffrey Scott. Most people interested in architecture will know of Scott. He is the author of a deservedly famous book. The *Architecture of Humanism* was first published in 1914 and instantly attained the status of a classic. I bring up *The Architecture of Humanism* because, although it is in one sense well known, its fundamental messages seem to have been forgotten. It is the old story of familiarity breeding, if not contempt, exactly, then at least neglect. It might seem odd to introduce Geoffrey Scott into a discussion of work by Peter Eisenman and Léon Krier. After all, the ostensible subject of *The Architecture of Humanism* is Renaissance architecture. But Scott’s subtitle—“A Study in the History of Taste”—points to the book’s larger purview. Although its subject is Renaissance architecture, its pertinence extends to the practice and appreciation of architecture generally.

Scott has two sets of lessons for us. The first revolves around his distillation of Vitruvius’s principles of architecture. Vitruvius had a clutch of seven or eight; Scott, quoting the Renaissance poet Henry Wotton, boils them down to three: *Commodity, Firmness, and Delight*—or as we might put it, *comfort and serviceability, craftsmanship and solidity, and beauty*. These are the principles that must be observed in order to achieve what Wotton called “well-building.”

Scott’s second set of lessons revolves around the series of “fallacies” he enumerates. Especially important in this context are the *Romantic Fallacy*, whose most typical form, Scott tells us, is “the cult of the extinct,” and the fallacies detailed in a chapter called “The Academic Tradition.” Scott was himself an apostle of traditional architectural order. But he noted that, although order is a good, it is not by itself sufficient for good architecture. “Many of the ugliest patterns and most joyless buildings,” he wrote, “possess order in a high degree; they exhibit fixed and evident ratios of design.” But because they lack the animating leaven of taste, they fail.

What is the gravamen of taste? In a word, it is the body. Again and again Scott came back to the importance of the human body as the indispensable measure in architecture. The needs and dispositions of the human spirit incarnate—which means both a body in space and a body registering, contemplating space—provide the measure of that bedrock architectural value, the appropriate.

Scott speaks partly as a historian of architecture, partly as a custodian of the humanist values that were articulated with luxurious richness in Renaissance architecture. Which is why the lasting value of his book is not as an antiquarian relic but as an ever contemporary inspiration. The humanist values for which Scott enlists architecture are as pertinent today as they were in 1914—or, for that matter, 1419. All of us have heard trendy architects and their apologists natter on about Michel Foucault, the advent of the “post-human,” and the impossibility of coherence or stability. But that is the twittering of sterility and exhaustion. As Scott noted, space affects us and can control our spirit. . . . The architect models in space as a sculptor in clay. He designs his space as a work of art: that is, he attempt through its means to excite a certain mood in those who enter it.

That is as true for us as it was for Brunelleschi or Alberti. And like them, we too possess what Scott calls the “the humanist instinct,” which “looks in the world for physical conditions that are related to our own, for movements which are like those we enjoy, for resistances that resemble those that can support us, for a setting where we should be neither lost nor thwarted.”

Catering to that “humanist instinct” in the medium of space is the vocation of architecture. There is an aesthetic component to this project: a component satisfied in
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the pleasing arrangement of masses, lines, shadows, and spaces. But the essential neediness and incompleteness of the human condition guarantees that architecture can never be judged by aesthetic criteria alone. "Architecture," as Scott put it, "is subservient to the general uses of mankind." We approach architecture with what Scott, echoing the famous Kantian formula, calls a "disinterested desire for beauty," but this desire is tethered by continual reference to the quotidian inventory of physical, psychological, and social imperatives.

If we compare Scott's humanism with the ideologies of Mr. Eisenman and Mr. Krier, we may distill several principles or, if that seems too grand a term, several admonitions. One is what I like to refer to as the Amis principle, after the British novelist Kingsley Amis. It reads: "Nice things are nicer than nasty ones." A simple principle, that—but consider how often it has been forgotten or indeed deliberately sabotaged by people who believe that notoriety can successfully substitute for genuine artistic accomplishment. This leads naturally to my second admonition, which I take from Alberti: "Never let greed for glory," Alberti says at the end of Book 9 of *On Architecture*, "impel you to embark rashly on anything that is unusual or without precedent." That is a sentiment that might profitably be chiseled into the lintel over the entrance of Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building at Yale.

The third admonition concerns what we might call the "pudding test": architecture must be not only looked at but lived with, indeed lived in, and so what works marvelously on paper may fail utterly on the street. The proof of architecture is concrete, not abstract. Seductive theories do not necessarily produce gratifying buildings.

The fourth admonition concerns what we might call novelty architecture. When someone erects a hot dog stand in the shape of a giant hot dog, the result may be in bad taste—maybe comic bad taste—but no great harm is done. The problem is that more and more architecture is coming to resemble novelty architecture. I don't mean that architects are slavishly mimetic. But novelty architecture comes in several varieties. Is a building that allegedly illustrates linguistic vertigo any less preposterous than the hot dog stand? How about something that could have come from the set for *Ben Hur*? Novelty architecture has a place; even Geoffrey Scott would admit that, I think. Only we need to keep it in its place: roadside refectories, amusement parks, universities, and other retreats from the serious business of life.

The last admonition I will mention is perhaps the most important. It concerns the question of essence, the ambition to exhibit or explore "the essence of architecture"—as if a house stripped bare somehow revealed the inner reality of a house. It is one of the virtues of the humanist instinct to recognize that the human world is—essentially is—something more than a distillation of essences. It is, on the contrary, a world of appearances: of how things look and comport themselves. This is something that our culture, and our architecture, has largely lost sight of, to our very great diminishment. The philosopher Roger Scruton has dilated on this point in his writings about architecture. "There is," Mr. Scruton writes, "no greater error in the study of human things than to believe that the search for what is essential must lead us to what is hidden." Mr. Scruton is hardly an aesthete: indeed, he follows Ruskin in insisting that art and culture are "not detachable, in the last analysis, from piety." But part of that piety is acknowledging our deep submission to the superficial, to the realm of appearance. This is the profound wisdom contained in Oscar Wilde's apparently flippant remark that only a very shallow person does not judge by appearances.

There is a large retrospective, even autumnal, ingredient in the current celebration of work by Peter Eisenman and Léon Krier. We are invited to look back a couple of decades or more to explore the work of two energetic architects whose words and whose work helped set the agenda for important aspects of contemporary architectural theory and practice. It is, in all senses of the word, heady stuff, full of breath-taking ideas. Are they, for all that, good ideas? Well, I will leave you all to answer that question—or to leave it unanswered if that course seems more expedient. Leaving it unanswered, I suspect, is what Brendan Gill would have done, if for no other reason than that he wanted to keep the fun of architecture going as long as possible. Fun is nice. I like fun. But fun remains most fun when it keeps to its appropriate place. The ambition to transform all of life into a playground is a prescription for the ruin of fun. Brendan knew this, too, fortunately. I am convinced that he would have approved of my concluding quotation, from the nineteenth-century American historian William Hickling Prescott. "The surest test of the civilization of a people," Prescott wrote, "... is to be found in their architecture, which presents so noble a field for the display of the grand and the beautiful; and which, at the same time, is so intimately connected with the essential comforts of life." It's a lot to live up to. But the alternative is having a lot to live down.