

aiaVT



The aiaVT newsletter is published by AIA Vermont,
the Vermont Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects.

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president's column

*donna j. leban, aia, lc, iesna;
2004 president aiaVT*

The busy construction season has arrived, and with it a noticeable increase in steel prices – according to many contractors, architects, and suppliers with whom I've spoken recently. Jim Richardson and Bob Rea from Vermont State Buildings are hoping to learn more about other's experiences in this matter. They are sponsoring a "dialogue" with contractors, suppliers, and architects on May 3 (that's a Monday) from 1:30-3:30 pm at the Pavilion Auditorium in Montpelier, next to the State House.

As rumor and innuendo would have it, it's the fault of the Chinese. I would guess that the significantly reduced number of steel mills in this country since 20 years ago also has something to do with it. Meanwhile, it's a great time to get rid of your old beater car that won't make it through another winter. The scrap steel alone is probably worth more than the car.

Now seriously, Jim and Bob are concerned that contractors who have signed lump sum construction contracts since late last year might use this as an excuse to ask for change orders. They would like to come up with a policy, and contract language, to help deal with the current issue, and avoid it being an issue in future contracts.

cont.

from "Avant Garde and Kitsch," *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944, Vol. I*/Clement Greenberg (ed. John O'Brian) (1939; p.11-13)

Kitsch is a product of the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses of Western Europe and America and established what is called universal literacy. Prior to this, the only market for formal culture, as distinguished from folk culture, had been among those who, in addition to being able to read and write, could command the leisure and comfort that always goes hand in hand with cultivation of some sort. This until then had been

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5.04:1

lighting as art

ALA Visual Presentation and Lecture
Russ Leslie, AIA

Thursday evening, May 13, 2004
Hors d'oeuvres starting at 6:30 pm
Lecture at 7:30 pm

Contois Auditorium, upstairs at Burlington City Hall
Church Street, Burlington, VT

\$20 Includes Food
\$10 Lecture Only

R.S.V.P. to aiaVT at aiavt@madriver.com by
Monday, May 10.

While all visual art involves light, Light Art is an emerging multi-faceted genre of surprising breadth and scope. Russ will explore with us, through still and video imagery, Light Art and some of its technological secrets. We will explore leading light artists' work, look at different conceptual approaches to its creation, and discuss diverse techniques.

Rarely do we have a chance to explore a topic as new and exciting as this. Therefore, AIA Vermont is taking this opportunity to share this "enlightening" presentation with members of the Vermont Arts Community, Landscape Architects and the general public. Who knows what future artistic collaborations might be born?

Please feel free to invite guests and friends.

Russ Leslie is a practicing architect, Professor of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Associate Director of the Lighting Research Center (LRC), the world's largest multi-disciplinary center for lighting research, education and technology transfer. Co-author of the proposal that established the LRC, Leslie is responsible for program development and operation of the LRC's \$5.2 million dollar annual research and education operation. He teaches and conducts research in architecture, lighting, daylighting, and energy efficiency.

Your input would be appreciated if you are currently dealing with this issue. If you can't make the meeting and have something to add, Bob and Jim ask that you give either of them a call at 802-828-5651, or e-mail: bob.rea@state.vt.us or jim.richardson@state.vt.us. If you are planning to attend, it is worth giving them a call for details.

Other than that, I hope to see you at the Lighting as Art lecture with Russ Leslie, AIA from RPI at Contois Auditorium in Burlington on May 13 at 6 PM. I am very happy to have a chance to bring Russ here to enlighten us about extraordinary uses of materials and lighting technology in applications around the world. Make sure to invite artists and local luminaries (as opposed to luminaires) as well.



inextricably associated with literacy. But with the introduction of universal literacy, the ability to read and write became almost a minor skill like driving a car, and it no longer served to distinguish an individual's cultural inclinations, since it was no longer the exclusive concomitant of refined tastes. The peasants who settled in the cities as proletariat and petty bourgeois learned to read and write for the sake of efficiency, but they did not win the leisure and comfort necessary for the enjoyment of the city's traditional culture. Losing, nevertheless, their taste for the folk culture whose background was the countryside, and discovering a

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5.04:2

firm profile- timothy d. smith & associates, p.c.

Timothy D. Smith & Associates (TDS & A) is a full-service Architectural firm that has operated out of offices in North Bennington since its formation in 1970. Our work is diverse in type and style and includes residential, commercial and institutional architecture, historic preservation and planning. The consistent principle underlying our work is our deep respect for the architectural and natural contexts in which buildings are placed and our belief that buildings should improve with age and use. This philosophy of design is reflected in all our work, from low-income housing to high-end residences; from institutional storage buildings to board of trustee meeting rooms.

Work currently under construction includes a new district courthouse in Rutland and a Visitor's Center along Interstate 89 in Sharon. The State of Vermont is our client for both of these projects. The courthouse replaces an existing building with a new neo-classical structure intended to extend the monumental architecture of Merchant's Row to the North. Its brick façade, marble columns and granite portico are all to be built with native Vermont materials. The Visitor's Center includes in its program a new Vermont State Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. Unusual aspects of the program include a "Living Machine" greenhouse-based waste processing system and geothermal heating, cooling and snow melting as well as the Veterans' "Honorial," honoring all Vermonters who served in the armed services during the Vietnam War.



*rutland district and family courthouse
rutland, vt.*



*sharon information center
sharon, vt.*

cont.

new capacity for boredom at the same time, the new urban masses set up a pressure on society to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption. To fill the demand of the new market, a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort could provide. Kitsch, using raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style,

cont.

5.04:3



*southwest vermont welcome center
guilford, vt.*



*private residence
shafisbury, vt.*

Recently completed projects include a car dealership for Honda and Toyota - two competing companies whose individual needs and guidelines had to be mediated and integrated into a single building; the remodeling of a six floor New York City brownstone mansion; the reconstruction of a 19th Century timber-frame barn into a residence in the hills of upstate New York and a desert residence in Tucson, Arizona.

Among the hundreds of other projects the firm has completed are the Southeast Vermont Welcome Center in Guilford; restoration of the Historic Old North Church in Old Bennington; Haviland's Priveledge, an historic mill converted to use as condominium residences; The Bennington Center for the Arts; Northshire Bookstore in Manchester; many projects at Castleton State College, Bennington College, Stonehill College, Allendale Columbia and Deerfield Academy campuses; commercial buildings throughout Vermont; and scores of residences across the northeast.

Timothy D. Smith & Associates was honored with a Vermont American Institute of Architects 2000 Award for Excellence in Architecture for the Southeast Vermont Welcome Center in Guilford as well as with the Vermont AIA "People's Choice" award. TDS&A projects have been published many times in local, regional and national publications.

For more information on Timothy D. Smith & Associates, visit their website at www.tdsarch.com.

but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money - not even their time. The precondition for kitsch, a condition without which kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully matured cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions, and perfected self-consciousness kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends. It borrows from it devices, tricks, stratagems, rules of thumb, themes, converts them into a system and discards the rest. It draws the life blood, so to speak, from this reservoir of accumulated experience... Because it can be turned out

cont.

5.04:4

not deconstructivism but shingles: *the distinctive home* by jeremiah eck

a review by donald maurice kreis

teaching for design

An Introductory Program for Architects Interested in Teaching Design to Grade School Children

Just a reminder....if you would like to explore the idea of volunteering to work on design projects with children, join aiaVT for this workshop and planning session.

*Tuesday, May 18, 2004
Presentation Begins at 4:00 pm
Hors d'Oeuvres Buffet at 6:00 pm*

*Firehouse Center for Visual Arts
149 Church Street, Burlington*

\$18 per Person

R.S.V.P. to aiavt@madriver.com by May 11.



Before he retired, Professor Penn Kimball of the journalism school at Columbia University was fond of terrorizing his students with a red stamp bearing the words "Here is Your Lead." No matter what Kimball's students produced by way of written reporting, he would invariably zero in on some detail in the middle of the article and declare it the real news.

In that spirit, here's the lead in Jeremiah Eck's recent book *The Distinctive Home: A Vision of Timeless Design*. It's on page 87, beneath a plan of an unbuilt home. Eck writes:

I've often thought that a 1,200-sq.-ft., two-story house would be perfect for many people if the spaces were divided up just right. It could contain a public, informal kitchen/sitting area at one end, a small private getaway space at the other (separated by a fireplace, perhaps), with two small bedrooms on the second floor. This would be an ideal plan for our time.

Zowie! Eck did not get the FAIA after his name for designing 1,200 square-foot homes, as his book and his web site, www.jearch.com, readily attest. He does what virtually every other accomplished residential architect in New England does – create big, luxurious homes for his wealthy clients. *The Distinctive Home*, published jointly by the Taunton Press and the AIA, is clearly intended as a polemic for potential clients who might otherwise be tempted to eschew the architect and go straight for the mass-produced McMansion.

cont.

mechanically, kitsch has become an integral part of our productive system in a way in which true culture could never be, except accidentally. It has been capitalized at a tremendous investment which must show commensurate returns; it is compelled to extend as well as to keep its markets. While it is essentially its own salesman, a great sales apparatus has nevertheless been created for it, which brings pressure to bear on every member of society. Traps are laid even in those areas, so to speak, that are the preserves of genuine culture. It is not enough today, in a country like ours, to have an inclination towards the latter;

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5.04:5



*“social house H” at Middlebury College
jeremiah eck*

Given that purpose, Eck should be forgiven for burying the revelation that small can be distinctive too. Nor can Eck be accused of hypocrisy, at least to this extent: Similarly buried on page 63 is a photograph of the 1,150 square-foot house, a simple and compelling tribute to the colonial house form, that he designed for himself on a half-acre site and inhabited for more than 15 years.

But here’s the rub: Eck moved out, to an older home he extensively renovated. It looks to be considerably bigger than 1,150 square feet — but decide for yourself. The photos are on page 4. And for all that Eck complains of sprawl and the proliferation of “heavy, boxy, and out-of-scale building,” he cannot resist telling his prospective clientele what it wants to hear: “While it’s fashionable lately to criticize big houses as bloated and ugly, I don’t think size is the problem.”

For this and other reasons, *The Distinctive Home* reveals more truths about architecture in northern New England than does, say, anything that could be written about House II, the leaky tribute to Jacques Derrida that Peter Eisenman designed in the Northeast Kingdom town of Hardwick. This is because the bread-and-butter of architectural practice in these parts is not deconstructivism but shingles, clapboard, fancy trim and the eternal struggle against the risk-aversion chronic to the architecture commissioning classes.

Eck gives those classes excellent advice. He points out that bigger isn’t necessarily better and that a good design does not start with a particular style – it ends up with one, as an appropriate response to the site and program. In language that is refreshingly straightforward, Eck addresses the importance of light, proportion and what he calls “marrying a house to the land.”

And, based on the projects pictured in Eck’s book, his taste is refined and not egocentric. There are certainly plenty of Eck’s creations featured here, the zenith of which is arguably the almost Wrightian cascade of triangles that he designed for

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one must have a true passion for it that will give him the power to resist the faked article that surrounds and presses in on him from the moment he is old enough to look at the funny papers.

from “Towards a New Laocoon” (1940; p.23)

The dogmatism and intransigence of the ‘non-objective’ or ‘abstract’ purists of painting today cannot be dismissed as symptoms merely of a cultist attitude towards art. Purists make extravagant claims for art,

cont.

5.04:6

“Working with
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helps us save energy
and money
for our clients.”

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



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a client with a craggy oceanfront site in Gloucester, Massachusetts. (The Bay State, specifically Martha's Vinyard, is also the scene of the featured Eck projects' nadir, a prissy pseudo-Victorian shack of just 616 square feet – proof that small is not always beautiful and that not everything capable of meeting stringent zoning limitations deserves to be built.) But the great majority of the projects featured in *The Distinctive Home* are by other designers, from Brian MacKay-Lyons of Halifax to James Cutler of Bainbridge Island, Washington – and, in between, a banquet comprised largely of projects that have received excellence awards from various AIA chapters.

An impressive egalitarianism prevails nearly throughout. Only occasionally does the text identify the particular projects Eck singles out for praise. Alas, the egalitarianism is not geographic. No work by Vermont architects is pictured, unless one counts a certain Turner Brooks of New Haven, Connecticut.

Buy this book and leave it in the waiting area of your architectural firm's reception area. But do so with the understanding that, fundamentally, this book is about business as much as beauty. What really bugs Eck, and what he posits as the opposite of the distinctive home, is uniformity – houses “that face the road like soldiers in formation” and have “an anonymous quality.” Never mind that uniformity plus ingenuity equals affordable excellence. Ignore the millions of people who live in cities precisely because they crave anonymity. The SUVs are streaming up the interstates, their drivers craving homes of distinction, if only they knew it.

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If you thought this review was insufficiently sensitive to the economic realities of architectural practice, you will certainly not enjoy www.dmcdmk.com, where one can read other published architectural writings by lawyer and journalist Donald Maurice Kreis.

because usually they value it much more than anyone else does. For the same reason they are much more solicitous about it. A great deal of purism is the translation of an extreme solitude, an anxiousness as to the fate of art, a concern for its identity. We must respect this. When the pursuit insists upon excluding 'literature' and subject matter from plastic art, now and in the future, the most we can charge him with off-hand is an unhistorical attitude. It is quite easy to show that abstract art like every other cultural phenomenon reflects the social and other circumstances of the age in which its creators live, and that there is nothing inside art itself, disconnected from history, which

cont.

5.04:7

aiaVT welcomes

kimball erdman, *professional affiliate of burlington*
jeffrey schneider, *aia*
trice stratman, *professional affiliate*

aiaVT wants to hear from you!

Donna Leban, AIA Vermont president, received proposed changes to five important documents used for State of Vermont projects. They include substantive, significant scope changes to design services. Most are related to Energy Conservation required for all new projects starting June 1, 2004. The State has asked for input from AIA Vermont. If you wish to make comments before this is released, please forward your comments to Hanne Williams at aiavt@madriver.com or mail written comments to AIAVT at 1662 Mill Brook Road, Fayston, VT 05673. The AIA Board of Directors wants to hear what you have to say before compiling a response to State Buildings. Please check out these important changes on the Newsletter Page of aiaVT.org and let us know what you think.

new pbs series helps architects design healthier homes

Energy Wise Healthy Home, a 26-part television series that documents the construction of a revolutionary 7,800 square-foot energy-efficient and healthy home, will begin airing on PBS stations nationwide in June 2004. The series explores new technologies that lower utility bills, improve personal health, and reduce damage to the environment.

Energy Wise Healthy Home provides practical, affordable solutions to two growing concerns: the high environmental, social and financial costs of energy waste and the negative health effects of poor home design and construction. The series will show energy-efficient building methods and materials that can cut energy bills by up to 90 percent. It will offer solutions to problems like childhood asthma, allergies and toxic mold reactions.

Each week, Energy Wise Healthy Home will follow, step-by-step, the construction of a traditionally designed but remarkably hi-tech home. As an issues-oriented series, it will focus on creating better homes with nontoxic building materials, energy-saving appliances, healthy pest and mold control and cutting-edge clean air and water systems. Additionally, it will examine environmentally sound lifestyle choices like new energy sources and sustainable urban design.

cont.

compels it to go in one direction or another. But it is not easy to reject the purist's assertion that the best of contemporary plastic art is abstract. Here the purists does not have to support his position with metaphysical pretensions. And when he insists on doing so, those of us who admit the merits of abstract art without accepting its claim in full must offer our own explanation for its present supremacy...It suffices to say that there is nothing in the nature of abstract art which compels it to be so. The imperative comes from history, from the age in conjunction with a particular moment reached in a particular tradition of art. This conjunction holds the artist in a vise from which at the

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5.04:8

aiaVT is edited by Andrea Murray, Assoc. 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:

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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.

Most of the techniques and products showcased in the series can be used in new homes of any type. Special segments promoting energy efficiency and healthy living ideas in existing homes through home improvement and retrofits will be included in many episodes.

Energy Wise Healthy Home will be certified by the Energy Star Program of the U.S. Department of Energy. It will also be a certified American Lung Association "Health House." Researchers from the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and other authorities on energy-efficient and healthy building standards are consultants to the series.

For information call James Shoaf, Executive Producer at (704) 377-3910.

present moment he can escape only by surrendering his ambition and returning to a stale past. This is the difficulty for those who are dissatisfied with abstract art, feeling that it is too decorative or too arid and 'inhuman,' and who desire a return to representation and literature in plastic art. Abstract art cannot be disposed of by a simple-minded evasion. Or by negation. We can only dispose of abstract art by assimilating it, by fighting our way through it. Where to? I do not know. Yet it seems to me that the wish to return to the imitation of nature in art has been given no more justification than the desire of certain partisans of abstract art to legislate it into permanency.

5.04:9