



The First Annual
AIA
Committee on Design
Symposium
on
Design Excellence

**DEFINING
ARCHITECTURAL
DESIGN
EXCELLENCE**
in a
MEASURING SOCIETY

May 16 2012
Washington DC



Anne Schopf, FAIA, is the Design Principal at Mahlum Architects, an award-winning firm in Seattle. Anne is the immediate past chair of COD and will moderate this event.



Charles E. Dagit, Jr. FAIA, founded Dagit Saylor Architects in 1970, has received over 60 design awards, and won the national design competition for the Cultural Arts Pavilion in Newport News, VA in 1984. Mr. Dagit has taught for 40 years at numerous universities including Temple, Drexel and the University of Pennsylvania.



Susan S. Szenasy, New York, is the Editor in Chief of Metropolis and the winner of AIA Institute Honors for Collaborative Achievement in 2009.



Ed Feiner, FAIA, is a Principal of Perkins and Will in Washington, DC. He is the former Chief Architect of the U.S. General Services Administration and the founder of the GSA Design Excellence Program.



Jane Weinzapfel, FAIA, is a Principal of 2007 AIA Firm Award Winner, Leers Weinzapfel Associates, Boston. Princeton Architectural Press recently published "Made to Measure: The Architecture of Leers Weinzapfel Associates."



Thomas Fisher, Associate AIA, is a Professor and the Dean of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota, the author of five books and former President of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.



Searching for Definitions of Architectural Design Excellence in a Measuring World

First Annual COD Symposium on Architectural Design Excellence
Defining Architectural Design Excellence in a Measuring Society
 Agenda

Introductions and introductory statements

"My understanding of the definition of Architectural Design Excellence"

Ed Feiner, Jane Weinzapfel, Tom Fisher, Susan Szenasy, Charles Dagit

Panelists commenting on each other's introductory statements

Questions and comments from the Audience

Introduction to the Discoveries of Columbus

An explanation of how we want to use Columbus as a case study.

Small Group Discussions about the Discoveries of Columbus

Ed Feiner, "Why is the best architecture often the oldest?"

Jane Weinzapfel "How important is context? Can architecture be evaluated outside of context?"

Tom Fisher, "Do Americans see architecture differently than Europeans? If so, how? If not, why does it seem to be more appreciated in Europe?"

Susan Szenasy, "Is the public our most important client? If not, who is? If so, how do we deal with the public's seemingly consistently different taste?"

Charles Dagit, "Is urban planning more important than architecture?"

Small Group Presentations on the answer to the questions above
 Break

Small Group Discussions about excellences or not of 5 buildings in Washington, DC

Ed Feiner United States Institute of Peace HQ, Moshe Safdie

Jane Weinzapfel AIA Headquarters Building, The Architects Collaborative

Tom Fisher The United States Capitol

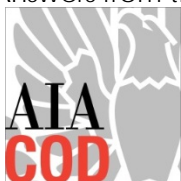
Susan Szenasy The DC Metro Stations, Harry Weese

Charles Dagit The East Wing of the National Gallery, I. M. Pei

Small group presentations on the excellences, or not, of the buildings listed above

"How do you define architectural design excellence?"

Answers from the audience then final comments from the panel



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 Columbus Indiana + Washington DC + Seville Spain



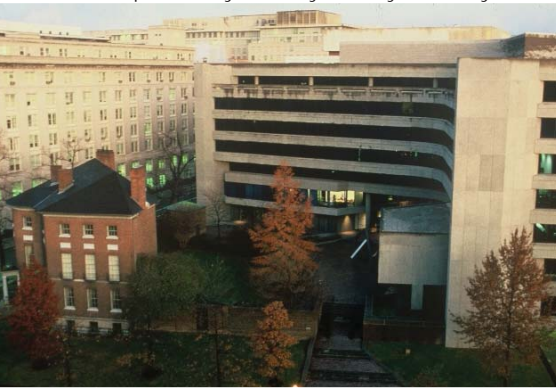
Capitol of the United States of America Many Architects photos courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol



East Wing of the National Gallery of Art I. M. Pei photos courtesy of Jeffrey Delc and pushpullbar.com



U.S. Institute for Peace Headquarters Moshe Safdie photos by Timothy Hursley courtesy of Safdie Architects



AIA Headquarters The Architect's Collaborative photos courtesy of the American Institute of Architects



D.C. Metro Stations Harry Weese photos by Larry Levine courtesy of Cynthia Weese and Bob Brueggmann



Searching for Definitions of Architectural Design Excellence in a Measuring World

Questions to Consider

How do you define architectural design excellence (ADE)?

Do you seek ADE in all of your work? Some of your work? What does that mean?
How do you incorporate ADE into your work? How do you know when you have achieved ADE?

Is there a lot of excellent architecture in Washington D.C? What does your answer tell you about our profession and its relation to the public?

How do the buildings illustrated here exhibit ADE?

Are some of the buildings illustrated less than excellent? If so, which ones and how is that they are less than excellent?

Do your clients demand ADE? If so, what does that mean? How do you think your clients measure whether you have provided excellent architectural services?

Up until about 100 years ago, architects were mostly called upon to create monuments. Today, architects are mostly called upon to create instruments. Most of what you design will be measured against how well it supports the practical goals of your clients, be they educational, commercial, residential, or something else. Is this true? If it is, did your education prepare you for the world in which you practice?

HSW: Health, Safety and Welfare. These are the terms that are most important in our continuing education requirements and are the basis of the legitimacy of our professional licensure. If is so important, why don't our award programs, our award juries, ever talk about HSW?

Is architectural style important to you? If so, how? Does your devotion to style help you in your practice?

Do your clients think architectural style is important? If so, do they select you based on the style of your work? Do you only work with clients who share your opinions about style?



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Why, after so many years of excellent public and commercial architecture in Columbus, Indiana, are there almost no modern houses?

Why, when you drive north from Florida's South Beach passing miles and miles of waterfront houses, less than one percent are anything we would call architecture?

Why do Americans drive designer cars and drink designer coffee but live, most all of them, in a house or apartment that is pretending to be the home of some wealthy ancestors long deceased?

Are we determined as a profession to continue to define ourselves in ways that isolate us from the greater part of the society in which we practice?

Can we find some definitions of architectural excellence upon which we can agree and that we can explain successfully to the silent majority? Is it even something we want to do?

At the COD website, we have established a discussion forum called "Camels on the Heads of Pins" where people are sharing their opinions about the meaning of architectural design excellence.

April 12-15, we will visit Columbus, Indiana, and ask the architects of some of the landmarks there to explain their understanding of the excellences their work embodies.

In May in Washington, DC,
Susan Szenasy, Jane Weinzapfel, Ed Feiner, Thomas Fisher and Will Bruder,
having spent the year grappling with these questions, will help us all to discover
our own answers.

After a year's worth of very valuable contributions to this effort, Will Bruder is unable to be with us today. Charles Dagit has graciously agreed to take Will's place.

And, finally, in Seville, in November, we will visit a place where two cultures collide and coexist. Architecture of two distinct traditions intermingle seemingly equally loved by all. And there is much new work we can use to hone our arguments and understandings.



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